Its Your Fairy Tale You Know

Elizabeth Rhodes Jackson

Boston
B. J. Brimmer Company
1922

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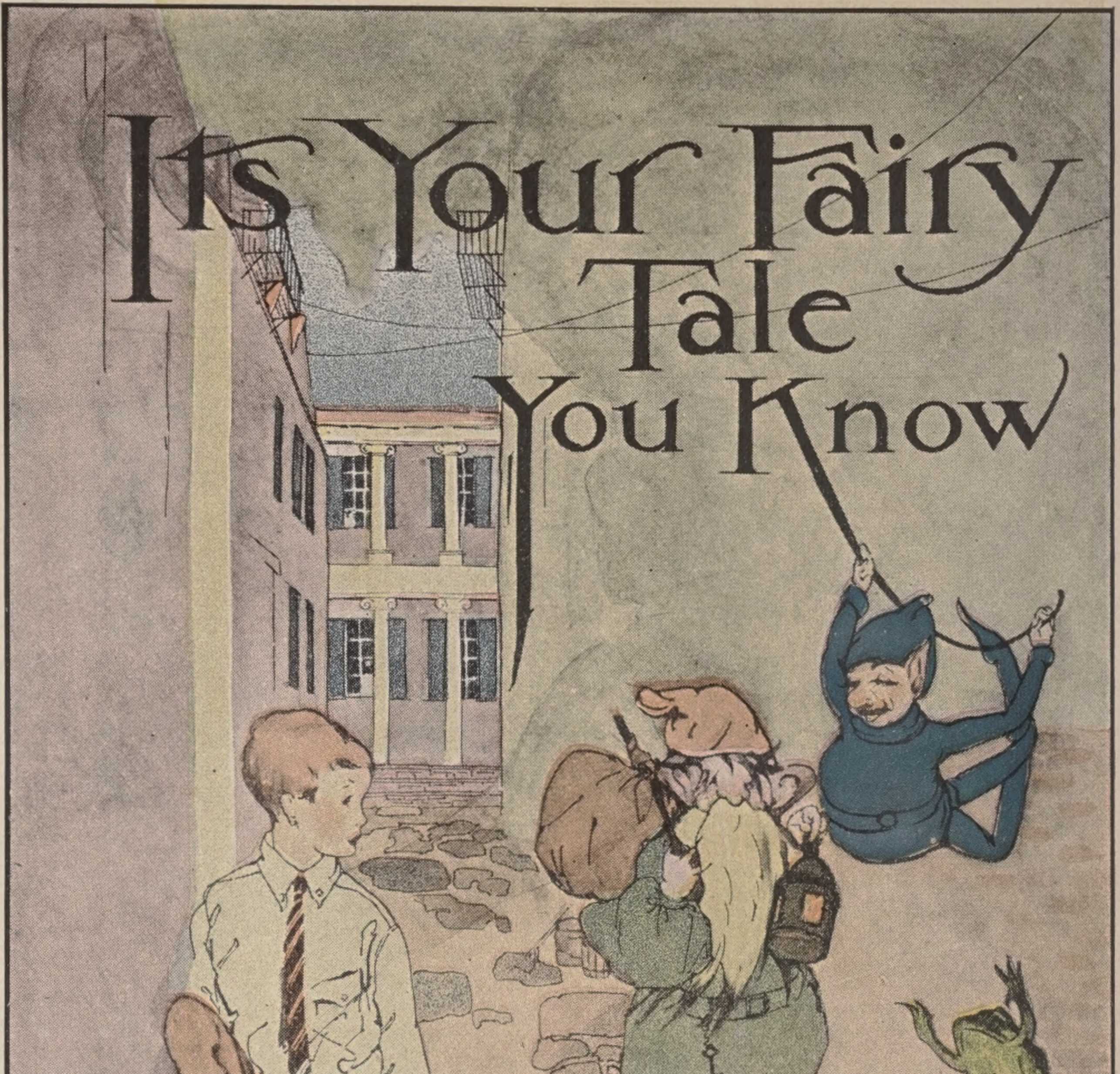
IT'S YOUR FAIRY TALE, YOU KNOW

ELIZABETH RHODES JACKSON



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Illustrated by
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TO MY CHILDREN

WINIFRED	RALPH
FOSTER	KINGSBURY

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IT'S YOUR FAIRY TALE, YOU KNOW

CHAPTER I

THE WISHING STONE

THE children's room of the Library was very still. Once in a while a murmur arose at the delivery desk, or some squeaky-shoed small feet crossed from open shelves to reading table. Occasionally a helpful child leaned across to another and whispered, "That's a dandy book. Have you read the rest of them?" But all of these minor sounds were blended into the general effect of stillness and seclusion; and they did not even reach the ears of a small boy named Wendell, who bent over a large volume on one of the low round tables. He did not hear the footfalls nor the murmurs; he knew nothing of the rumble of traffic that rose through the windows; he was not even conscious of gathering dusk, though the librarian began to snap on lights in dark corners. Wendell read on and on, giving an excellent imitation of a bookworm.

Absorbed as he was in his book, you probably picture him as a slight, pale little chap, somewhat underweight for his ten years, with pale cheeks, a bulging brow, large horn spectacles, completely immersed in a volume of Emerson's Essays. Not at all. He had a round, brown face, a strong, lithe body, excellent arm and leg muscles, and nice brown eyes that were in unusually good condition because he never overworked them on school books. He had never opened Emerson's Essays in his life, and the large volume that just now held his attention so completely was a book of fairy tales.

Wendell never read anything but fairy tales, unless it happened to be " required reading " at the select school for boys that he attended. In fairy tales he reveled. He read them in bed with the light on at night. He read them before breakfast and thus made himself late at school. He hid them behind his geography in study periods. He took them to Sunday school till his teacher found it out. He read them in the street when he went on an errand and greatly irritated traffic policemen by trying to cross the street, reading. Altogether, it was proverbial in Wendell's family that he could always be kept out of mischief by a fairy tale. But oh ! what low marks he did get in school !

For he didn't like to study. He liked baseball and swimming and roller-skating, but he didn't like the capitals of the United States, nor dates, nor fractions. Particularly he didn't like fractions.

Thoroughly entranced, he read on till another boy reached across in front of his page to get a book lying on the table. The interruption roused him. He glanced up, saw that the lights were on and the afternoon waning, reluctantly rose and returned his volume to the shelves, and sauntered out with two books of fairy tales under his arm.

He strolled through the upper corridor, with an approving glance at the great panel of the Muses, who looked to him like fairies on a large scale ; but his goal was the delivery room at the other end, with its wonderful paintings of Sir Galahad and the Quest of the Holy Grail, illustrations de luxe of one of Wendell's favorite folk tales. Long he lingered over Sir Galahad arriving at the Castle of the Maidens, and long he gazed on the old spellbound king. He sighed deeply as he left the room at length. Oh, to have lived in those days !

Through a cross street he hurried along to the Esplanade. Here was fairy land indeed, had Wendell but had eyes to see it ! The sunset glow had not yet faded from behind the classic buildings on the river front, and twin necklaces of lights were strung between city and city. But it all seemed to the boy depressingly modern and unromantic. No suggestion to him of fairies or giants or witches or wishes. He walked along, still under the spell of his Library reading, regretting that there was not enough light to read as he walked, hurrying home to open his fairy books.

From the Embankment, he turned into an old-fashioned street on the slope of Beacon Hill, and began to climb the heights. His great-great-grandfather had lived on that street, in Wendell's present home, in the early days when fashion first built up the Hill. His great grandfather and his grandfather and his father, in turn, had lived there through many changes, as fickle fashion turned to newer avenues. As Wendell paused in front of his house, — a stern, square front, with a door whose solidity and heavy brass knocker and sentinel sidelights gave the impression that it had been put there to keep people out instead of to let them in, — he was hailed by a friend across the street.

Sammy Davis' father had a name that ended in *idsky* when he lived in Russia ; but after he came to America and moved into one floor of the decadent mansion next to Wendell's, the family had decided to give an American twist to the name. So Davis it had become.

Sammy Davis crossed to Wendell.

" Where yer been ? "

" Library."

" Get a book ? "

" Yep."

" Lessee it."

Sammy reached for the two books, grabbed them. Wendell grabbed in turn. Perfectly willing he was, of course, to show Sammy the books, but who doesn't resent having things grabbed ? Sammy ran across the street ; Wendell followed, chased, ducked when Sammy dodged. There was an upright stone post at the inner edge of the sidewalk, barring vehicles from entering a narrow blind court that opened opposite Wendell's house. Sammy dodged behind this, then out again, ran around in a circle and back to the post to dodge once more, then ran out again, then back to the post. The chase was prolonged and I suppose that they encircled that post a dozen times.

When Wendell at length secured both books, he vaulted up and sat on top of the post, which was roughly hewn and small on top and not so very comfortable. Still, you *could* stick on.

"I'll tell you, Sammy," he said. "You come over to-night, and we'll each read one — oh Jehoshaphat!" He had suddenly remembered his home work, — a double allowance of fractions because he had failed to-day.

"Make it to-morrow night, Sammy," he said. "I've got home work to-night."

A window on the fourth floor above was raised, a frowsy head stuck out. "Sammee!" called a strident voice. "Come in and eat."

"So long. Sorry to leave you," said Sammy, and departed upward, while Wendell sat and mused on the post. Once more he drifted away into memories of fairy tales. At length he shook himself with a heartfelt though silent, "Gee whiz! I wish I were living in a fairy story right now, here in Boston," and slid down and went in to dinner.

Wendell's family consisted of his father and mother and two older brothers, Alden and Otis. Just now there was also a visiting relative, Cousin Virginia, a sprightly young lady from New York, who tolerated Boston because it was only five hours from her delightful home town. She seemed to live in a constant state of amusement at things that

Wendell's people didn't consider funny at all. Her greeting this time to Wendell was,

"Well, Ralph Waldo Theocritus Shakespeare, how's the Public Library to-day?"

Wendell didn't see anything funny in that. He grunted.

"Did you happen to see that interesting new volume of correspondence between Socrates and Lady Jane Grey?"

Wendell didn't even know that this was intended to be funny.

"I was reading fairy stories," he said.

"Shocking!" said Cousin Virginia. "A descendant of the Puritans!"

"As to that," broke in Wendell's brother Alden, who was a Junior at Harvard, specializing in Original Sources, "the Puritans had some imagination. Look at witchcraft. Look at the Wishing Stone."

"What wishing stone?" asked Cousin Virginia. "I've seen the kind they set in a ring on a girl's third finger. Do you mean that kind?"

This bit of levity fell flat.

"The Wishing Stone,*" said Alden, "was a projecting boulder in the Common, somewhere near the present junction of the Beacon Street mall and the Oliver Wendell Holmes walk. There was a tradition that if one walked or ran nine times around the stone and then stood or sat on it and silently made a wish, the wish would come true."

"And here you've shown me all the sights of Boston and left that out!" cried Cousin Virginia.

---

* Winsor's *Memorial History of Boston*, vol. I., p. 554.

"Why, it's much more interesting than Bunker Hill Monument. Let us hie us thither by moonlight as soon as we finish dinner. Careful, Wendell; if your eyes *should* pop right out, you couldn't put them back."

"The stone," said Alden, "is no longer there."

"Oh, where is it, Alden?" cried Wendell.

"According to the early diarists," returned Alden, "most of those boulders on the Common were used for building stone from time to time. I doubt whether its history could possibly be traced."

"Well, why couldn't they hang on to it when they had it?" said Wendell in deep disappointment. Then he went up to his room to do his home work, — that sad double lot of fractions.

CHAPTER II

THE PIXIE STARTS IT

OF course, Wendell's intentions were excellent. He fully meant to devote himself to that home work, to forget the fairy stories that still hung like a mist about his brain and tackle those fractions like a man. But we all know how it is, — just as soon as we have looked at this one funny page of the newspaper, or read this one verse, or found out what the next chapter is about, we will certainly settle right down to business. There was the arithmetic. There were the two fairy books from the Library. Unless you are a seraph with wings and always do your duty, you will not be surprised to hear that Wendell treated himself to just one peek at the fairy stories before doing his home work, and that he never thought of those fractions till he heard his mother's step on the stairs, when he shoved the fairy book into his desk drawer and opened his arithmetic at random.

"Bedtime, my son. Have you finished your lessons ?" asked his mother.

"No ! Bothersome lot ! Can't make anything of this example — have to give me another half-hour," muttered Wendell, not really wishing to deceive his dear mother, but a little bit ashamed to tell her how he had neglected his duty.

"I'm sorry, dear, but you'll have to do it in the morning. You mustn't lose sleep. And your brain will be clearer then. I'll tell Jane to call you half an hour early."

"Many are called, but few get up," as the proverb hath it. Wendell, next morning, was not one of the few. Jane's call fell on sleepy ears. He turned over for one more snooze, woke an hour later to find himself 'way behind time, hustled through his dressing and his breakfast, and was off to school with lessons unprepared, — a sad thing that happened only too often in his easy-going life.

He managed to slide through most of his recitations, badly but not disgracefully, until he came to the arithmetic class. I might tell you in detail of his tragic floundering through problems that he was supposed to have prepared, of his guilty acknowledgment that he had not made up the delinquencies of yesterday and the day before, and of the stern wrath that was visited upon him by the arithmetic teacher, a strict and disciplinary spinster, whose patience he had often tried in the past. But this is not a school story. I have to record only such a part of his troublous career as led directly to the wonderful adventure of the Wishing Stone. So, briefly, he was " kept in," with three days' problems to finish before he could go home.

His teacher, who bore the singularly happy name of Miss Ounce, left him alone in the deserted schoolroom. She had a lesson to give in another part of the building. Wendell pulled his book in front of him, flipped the pages open to the proper place, ran his fingers through his hair, and remained in that attitude, which may have denoted either deep concentration or utter dejection. He read the first problem through twice, and it had no more meaning for him than Dante's Inferno in the original tongue.

" Jee-rusalem ! " he said aloud after a long pause.

" Can I be of any assistance ? " asked a friendly voice. It came from a little being perched on the desk in front of him, who certainly had not been there a moment before. He was about the size of a two-year-old child, but he had the face of an old man, a genial old man with twinkling eyes. His body was very round and quite filled his suit of blue knitted jersey, and his arms and legs were long and spindling.

" For goodness' sake, who are you ? " gasped Wendell.

" I'm a Pixie," said the being.

" You are ? " said Wendell. " I didn't know there were any — out of fairy stories."

" But I'm *in* a fairy story," explained the Pixie politely. " I'm in the same fairy story you're in."

" Am I in one ? " said the startled Wendell.

" Since last night," declared the Pixie. " You wished to be, you know, on the Wishing Stone, after you had run around it nine times. It's a sure charm."

"The Wishing Stone! Is that the old Wishing Stone — the alley post?"

"Somewhat fallen into disuse," assented the Pixie, "but never-the-less the Wishing Stone."

"Well, I never!" said Wendell.

It was so stupendous, such an unbelievable piece of good fortune, that at first he did not grasp its possibilities. Then his eye fell on the open book lying on his desk.

"Say!" he exclaimed. "If that's all true, if I'm really living in a fairy story, there ought to be some way of settling junk like this in short order." He gave a vindictive thump to the arithmetic.

"That's what I came for," said the Pixie. "I thought I saw a business opening here."

"You mean —" faltered Wendell.

"Why, I'll do your problems for you. That's easy. And you do three tasks for me."

"Three?"

"Yes, it's always three," said the Pixie.

"Say, I think I ought to get more than just these problems for three. I think you ought to do my home work till the end of the term."

"Just as soon," said the Pixie. "No trouble to me. Is it a bargain?"

"But what will you want me to do?" said Wendell.

"I don't know what I want you to do," returned the Pixie. "How should I know? Take a chance. Be a sport."

"All right," said Wendell. "I will. Here are the problems."

"Look in your desk," said the Pixie immediately.

Wendell opened it. There lay three sheets of large pad paper, covered with problems completely solved. Wendell's name and the date were written at the top in his own handwriting. The work was done neatly enough to pass, but not so excessively neatly as to arouse suspicion.

"Well, you are some little fiend at arithmetic," pronounced Wendell with great relief.

"Glad you are satisfied," said the Pixie. "Of course you understand that if you can't perform my tasks, you belong to me."

"Well, I might as well belong to you as to Miss Ounce," ruminated Wendell. "Come on with your first task. I suppose it will be water in a sieve from the Charles River or something like that. They always are."

"I should say not," said the Pixie with scorn in his voice. "That might be all very well for the old Kobold that lives under Flag Staff Hill. It's just his style, in fact. He's using the same stuff he did when Merlin was practicing. No, I like to advance with the best thought of the time. I'm no back number. Trust me, *I*'ll find something up to date."

"Well, speed up," said Wendell. "What do you want me to do?"

"How should I know?" said the Pixie. "Give me time. I'll drop around tonight and let you know."

Just as he was speaking, the door opened, and in came Miss Ounce, and maybe Wendell didn't jump! He started so conspicuously that Miss Ounce fixed him with an accusing eye and said,

"Well, Wendell, up to mischief, I suppose, instead of doing your work."

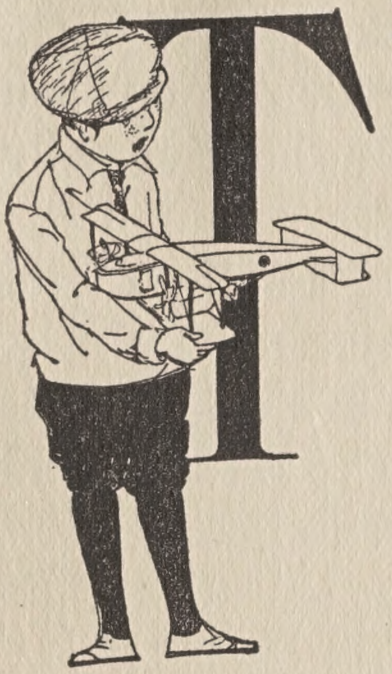
"No, Miss Ounce," said Wendell, noting with relief that the Pixie was nowhere in sight, and promptly handed over his papers.

"Um, um!" murmured Miss Ounce. "Very good! Might be neater. Every one right, though. Now, Wendell, why is it that when you can do such excellent work as this, you have such a shocking daily record? Yes, *shocking* is the word."

Wendell knew the answer to that, but he didn't give it. He took his lecture silently, standing first on one foot and then on the other, but his mind was on the magic task that the Pixie was to set him, and as soon as he could he slid out of the room.

CHAPTER III

THE PIXIE'S FIRST TASK



THE Pixie came that evening, true to his word. Wendell, undisturbed by fractions, luxuriously idling over his fairy books, looked up suddenly and there sat the funny little fellow on the foot of the bed.

" How are you ? " said the Pixie. " I didn't have time to say good-bye to-day. Your Miss Ounce turned the door-handle too quickly."

" That's all right," said Wendell. " Are you ready to spring my first task yet ? "

" Yes, *sir*," said the Pixie gleefully. " And you can't say it isn't up to the minute. You must bring me an aeroplane that you have found traveling underground."

" Why, there's no such thing," said Wendell vexedly. " An aeroplane traveling underground ! How silly ! An aeroplane doesn't travel underground. How can it ? "

" Don't ask me," shrugged the Pixie. " How should I know ? You can't expect me to make up the tasks and think up the answers too. Be reasonable." And he vanished.

Wendell was greatly cast down.

" It's a fool task," he said as he went to bed. " In fact, it's impossible."

He woke with a sense of calamity hanging over him. Really, it was almost as bad as having fractions on his mind. He was so serious at breakfast that Cousin Virginia asked him if he was practicing to be a Puritan Ancestor at a fancy-dress ball. This levity seemed to Wendell ill-timed.

The brooding anxiety lingered with him all through school time. What if he couldn't do the task ? What would it be like to belong to a Pixie ? He didn't like the prospect.

He came out of his school on Beacon Street, still with the cloud lowering over him. He felt desperate. He thought of going over to the train yards of South Station and stealing a ride in an empty cattle-car bound for the prairies of the West. He meditated stowing away on a ship bound for Timbuctoo or Guam or somewhere. Just then a tempting truck passed him " south "-bound on Beacon Street. It was low and it was going slowly, and altogether it offered just the right opportunity to " hook " a ride. Wendell seized the opportunity and the truck together ; and dodged down inside unseen by the driver.

In Allston, Wendell dropped out again. His mind was somewhat relieved by this pleasant adventure, and he didn't wish to get too far from home. He hailed an electric for Park Street.

Now, you may not believe it, but the first thing he saw when he got on the car was an aeroplane — a toy aeroplane about four feet long, carried in the arms of a freckle-faced boy.

Wendell sat down by the boy.

" Does it go ? " he said.

" Sure it does," said the freckle-faced boy.

" How ? " said Wendell.

" You wind it up," said the boy.

It was apparently a perfect model of a large aeroplane, a fascinating toy. The freckle-faced boy let him hold it, let him examine it closely. It was a joy to see such a perfect mechanical model on that small scale ; but suddenly it brought a leaden lump to Wendell's heart. It reminded him of his impossible task.

" Where you taking it ? " asked Wendell.

" Home. I live in Medford."

" Change at Park Street ? " said Wendell.

" Scollay Square," said the boy. They were now opposite the Public Garden.

" I'll bet it can travel," said Wendell.

" You've said it," replied the boy. " But," he added, grinning, as the electric sloped down into the Subway, " this is the first time it ever traveled underground."

Wendell nearly bounced from his seat. " Say ! " he almost yelled. " What'll you take for that aeroplane ? "

" Don't want to sell it," said the boy. " I just got it."

" But if you should sell it," persisted Wendell.

" But I ain't a-goin' to sell it," said the freckle-faced boy.

" But if you ever *should* want to sell it," reiterated Wendell. " Say, there's something, you know, you'd rather have."

" Well, I don't know. What, f'r instance ? "

" I'll give you anything you like for it," offered Wendell, who was rapidly formulating a plan in his mind. " Wouldn't you like a gun, now ? "

" I've got a gun," said the boy.

" Don't you want a dog ? " pleaded Wendell.

" Is it a trick dog ? " asked the boy.

" Do you want a trick dog ? " questioned Wendell.

" Yes, I do."

" Well, it is a trick dog," said Wendell. " Just you get out here," for meantime they were nearing Park Street, " and I'll show him to you. I live right near here."

" What tricks can he do ? " asked the boy.

" You wait and ask him," said Wendell.

Once out of the Subway, Wendell left the boy on a bench on the Common, and sprinted across the green expanse, in spite of the official sign,

KEEP OFF THE GRASS
IF YOU WANT TO ROAM
JOIN THE NAVY

He shot around the corner of his street, circled the Wishing Stone rapidly nine times, climbed on top of it and said to himself,

" I wish for a trick dog that will do any trick you tell him to."

" Woof ! Woof ! " said an ingratiating voice near him, and there was the dog. He was of no special breed, just a lost-dog breed of mongrel, but he had the look in his eye that means a dog will do anything in the world for you if he loves you.

" Sit up and beg, old fellow," commanded Wendell, and the dog sat up with an excited little bark.

" Heel," ordered Wendell, who had no time to lose, and the two chased excitedly through the streets to the Common, and there, to Wendell's relief, waited the impatient boy with his aeroplane.

" Here he is," said Wendell. " Here's your trick dog."

The freckle-faced boy looked him over critically.

" He ain't much to look at," he said.

" Well," said Wendell, " you didn't say you wanted him to take a prize in a beauty contest. You asked for a trick dog."

" What can he do ? " asked the boy.

" You just try him," said Wendell.

" Dead dog ! " said the freckle-faced boy.

The dog dropped flat and rolled over motionless. He didn't even blink an eye.

" Live dog ! " said the boy, and up he jumped and frisked and wagged and was very much alive.

" Is that all he can do ? " asked the boy.

" No, he can do any trick," said Wendell. " I don't know' em all myself. He knew 'em when I got him."

" Where'd you get him ? " asked the boy suspiciously.

" Given to me," said Wendell. " Let's have the aeroplane."

The boy hesitated. Perhaps he was afraid that the dog had been stolen or found by Wendell, and might soon be claimed by the police. But the dog himself settled the question. He jumped up on the freckle-faced boy and "woof"-ed engagingly; and when the freckle-faced boy stooped to pat him, he licked the boy's freckles so warmly and wetly and scratchily and lovingly that the boy hastily handed the aeroplane to Wendell and gathered the dog right up in his arms; and the bargain was complete.

Wendell had a few pangs himself. The dog had found a warm place in his heart too. But he consoled himself with the reminder that he could wish for another just like him any time. And he had the aeroplane.

He took it over to the parade ground on the other side of the Common, and tried it out. It flew beautifully. On its own merits, apart from Wendell's need to satisfy the Pixie's demand, it was a very desirable possession.

It struck Wendell as strange that, whatever adventures the Wishing Stone had thus far brought him, seemed to increase the number of things he had to wish for. He had never yearned for an aeroplane before, but now it seemed to him that he couldn't bear to part with this one to the Pixie. Of course, he had often thought he would like a dog; but now that the Wishing Stone had brought to life this wagging, barking, loving morsel of a pup, Wendell was almost unhappy without him. He wondered if it would be that way all the time, — if every granted wish would produce more ungranted ones. If that were so, it would really be happier not to begin the endless chain, not to have the first wish granted. That was the way it turned out in a good many of the fairy stories, — the black pudding, for instance, on the end of the old woman's nose.

A great truth was almost within Wendell's grasp for the moment, — that it is not the attainment of a wish, but the effort to attain it that brings us happiness : that right activity, not idle possession, is man's happiest endowment. Wendell had his finger on this key to happiness, but as he was only a small boy flying a toy aeroplane, and not a great philosopher, he did not grasp the key, but let his thoughts wander to the Pixie, who would probably be all ready with another task after dinner.

When the Pixie suddenly appeared that evening (sitting this time on top of the chiffonier, with his thin long legs drooping over the drawers), Wendell said triumphantly,

" Well, I got the aeroplane." He stroked it lovingly where it stood balanced on his desk.

" Why, yes, it's an aeroplane, all right," granted the Pixie ; " but it isn't traveling underground."

" But it was when I found it," protested Wendell. " A boy had it in the Subway."

The Pixie looked crestfallen.

" I never thought of that," he admitted. " You win."

" Tell me all about it," he added with some curiosity.

Wendell told him the whole thing, but the Pixie looked grave when he mentioned the Wishing Stone.

"You're not using them up too fast, are you?" he said doubtfully. "That makes two, you know."

"Two what?" said Wendell.

"Why, two wishes. You only have three, you know."

"Is that a fact?" asked Wendell anxiously. "I didn't know. Is that straight?"

"Of course," said the Pixie. "Everything goes by threes in fairy stories."

"I'm afraid you're right," said Wendell gloomily.

"I know I am," said the Pixie. "Well, are you ready for the next task?"

"All right. What comes next?" asked Wendell.

CHAPTER IV

WENDELL FINDS AN UNEXPECTED ALLY

THE Pixie brightened a bit. “ I have a poser this time,” he said. “ You must find an acorn on Acorn Street.”

It was Wendell’s turn to look crestfallen. As every Beacon Hill boy knows, Acorn Street is only one block long, or rather one block short, and there isn’t an oak on it. In fact, there isn’t a tree of any kind : there isn’t room for one.

The Pixie looked delighted, but he tried to assume a nonchalant air to hide his triumph. He swung one knee over the other carelessly and tilted his chin.

“ We-ell ! ” said Wendell, a bit discouraged. But the thought came to him that in every fairy story the knight who passes the first of three tests always squeaks through the other two also, so of course there must be some way out.

“ I’ll have to be going,” said the Pixie in an offhand way. “ You’ll find your arithmetic paper in the desk drawer. See you to-morrow night.”

"Hold on," said Wendell. "You forgot the aeroplane."

"Forgot it? How?"

"Aren't you going to take it along?"

"Good gracious, no," returned the Pixie peevishly. "I can't take care of all the truck I tell people to bring me. I don't run a junk shop. Keep it yourself. I don't want it."

Now that was great luck for Wendell. It brought a large amount of pleasure into an existence which would otherwise have been most cheerless; for the unsolved problem loomed before him of finding an acorn on Acorn Street.

He chose to go through Willow Street on his way to school next morning, which brought him of course to the head of Acorn Street. There was the neat little sign fastened on the brick wall, — a bunch of three acorns and the name in artistic lettering, — evidently the creation of an artist brain and fashioned by a master hand. Wendell had an inspiration. He would cut out one of those acorns and take it to the Pixie as a last resort. Of course, he might be arrested and put in jail for mutilating a street sign; and after all his trouble, the Pixie might not consider it an adequate acorn; still the suggestion was something to fall back upon.

Standing at the top of the extremely steep slope which is Acorn Street, Wendell surveyed the prospect doubtfully. He saw a narrow cobble-stoned roadway; on his left, a trim row of doll houses, each with its projecting doorstep and old-fashioned scraper, its spotless white door and shining brass knocker, and a narrow brick sidewalk where two thin people could just walk abreast ; on his right, a long brick wall, broken by neat back doors, and a still narrower brick sidewalk where only one very thin person could walk abreast. Nowhere was there a tree, nor room to plant a tree. There were a few straggling blades of grass between the cobble-stones and between the bricks, but not a crevice large enough to accommodate a single acorn.

A postman came along, whistling cheerily. Wendell stood off the brick pavement to let him pass. Perhaps the postman could help.

" This is Acorn Street, isn't it ? " said Wendell.

" Some people call it that," responded the postman jokingly. " Millionaires' Alley, *I* call it."

" Why, are they all millionaires here ? " asked Wendell.

" Just about," said the postman ; " and I knew this street when there were three families in every house, and the walls that black with dirt, you could write your name on 'em in chalk. But these millionaire artists discovered it. Nuts, I call 'em, with their glass studios on the roof and their Packard cars that have to back out whenever the ice truck comes through."

Wendell felt that they were wandering from the point.

" But did you ever see an acorn here ? " he asked.

" Nope," said the postman. " No acorns here. They named it that, I guess, because it isn't big enough to be named for a full-grown tree like Walnut or Chestnut. Peanut Street *I*'d call it."

" Well, I've got to get to school," said Wendell. He jogged down the short but precipitous length of treeless Acorn Street, and so on to school.

After school, as he started for home, the Public Garden tempted him, and he turned in from Beacon Street. It was a warm October day, and the Garden wore an air of resuscitated midsummer. He sat down on a bench on the Charles Street side, facing the lake, which looked very attractive, although it was no longer bright with the little boating parties and slow-gliding swan-boats of summer. A flock of doves, seeing Wendell settled to stay, fluttered down all around him for expected crumbs ; and some busy little sparrows, who are always more alert than the doves and capture twice as much food, hopped along the path. Wendell felt in his pockets for stray provender, but without results. A gray squirrel, bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, loped through the rustling leaves, and ran up the bench that Wendell occupied. He had a very busy air as of one who stops for a moment only, in the midst of pressing engagements. A slight inadvertent movement of Wendell's sent him scurrying down again. He frisked through the dead leaves, dug up something of interest from among them and sat up on his hind legs to handle it. Wendell saw that it was an acorn and noticed that he was sitting under a young oak. " Pity they couldn't plant a few of them where they belong," he said bitterly.

After the squirrel's desertion, he sat there a few minutes longer, but the pigeons, too, soon found that he had no picnic to offer them and flew off in a flock to a small girl with bare knees, accompanied by a French-bonneted nurse, who had a whole bag of popcorn. He got up, then, and, kicking the leaves before him, shuffled out to the wide entrance at Charles and Beacon Streets.

A traffic policeman, very military-looking in trim khaki, was holding up the Charles Street traffic while automobiles spun up and down Beacon Street. Wendell, pausing on the curb, saw him suddenly check the Beacon Street traffic, while still holding the Charles Street lines at bay. The large square expanse was quite clear except for the khaki figure with both arms uplifted. Charles Street truck-drivers prepared to speed up. Beacon Street automobilists craned their heads out to see what was delaying the long double lines. Foot passengers lining the curbstones looked impatient and watched the traffic man for the signal that did not come. Apparently he had forgotten what he was there for.

Then a smile spread along the curb-stone ranks, — a smile that merged into a ripple of laughter quite unusual among self-contained Boston pedestrians, as the impatient waiters saw that the majestic khaki officer was holding up scores of important citizens to let one small gray squirrel cross the street.

It was Wendell's little friend of the Public Garden, still intent on pressing business, who, unmindful of all safety-first rules, was taking a diagonal cut from corner to corner across one of the busiest thoroughfares of Boston.

"I know that squirrel. He lives in Louisburg Square," Wendell heard a man say. "I know him by the look in his eye." Which shows how cocksure of their own judgments some people are.

The squirrel made the farther corner in safety. The traffic man gave the signal. The crowd surged forward, Wendell with them. He crossed by right angles to the squirrel's corner and saw that busy little beast frisking along Charles Street, with the deliberate purpose of one who knows his goal, and then turning up into quiet Chestnut Street.

Wendell followed him, as it was his direct route also ; but it was not until the squirrel turned from Chestnut Street into West Cedar Street that Wendell saw with fast-beating heart that he carried in his mouth an acorn for his winter storehouse. If the squirrel should — oh, if only he should — ! Yes, opposite Acorn Street he paused. It was evident that he had intended to proceed along West Cedar Street to Mount Vernon Street, which bounds Louisburg Square on the nearer side ; but on the door-step of a West Cedar Street house sat a cat, a sleek gray pussy, and when she saw the squirrel, she grew tense all over and began to quiver, commencing at the tip of her tail ; and the squirrel saw her — *and turned up into Acorn Street.*

Would he drop it ? oh, would he ? Would no yapping puppy come to the rescue ? Would no tidbit of garbage tempt him to investigation ? No, Acorn Street appeared deserted by man and beast. Its aristocratic spotlessness offered no hope of a bread crust or even a banana peel.

But just then one of the spotless white doors opened. A baby girl emerged right in the path of the squirrel. He was not alarmed : baby girls had been a bountiful providence to him since his infancy. But this baby was a determined little maiden whose brain and hand worked in unison. Quick as thought she grabbed the squirrel's beautiful bushy tail, and quite as quickly she loosed it, for the little gray chap dropped his acorn and turned his sharp teeth upon that plump little hand. Then, as he felt himself free, he scurried up the hill without stopping for anything, and turned westward toward Louisburg Square. When Wendell passed through the Square, the acorn safe in his trousers pocket, the squirrel was still chattering excitedly on the branch of a tree, scolding every one in particular and in general for the loss of his acorn.

" It's a shame, old chap," said Wendell, pausing to peer at him through the iron railing. " But I'll bring you a bag of peanuts to make up for it, you old life-saver, you."

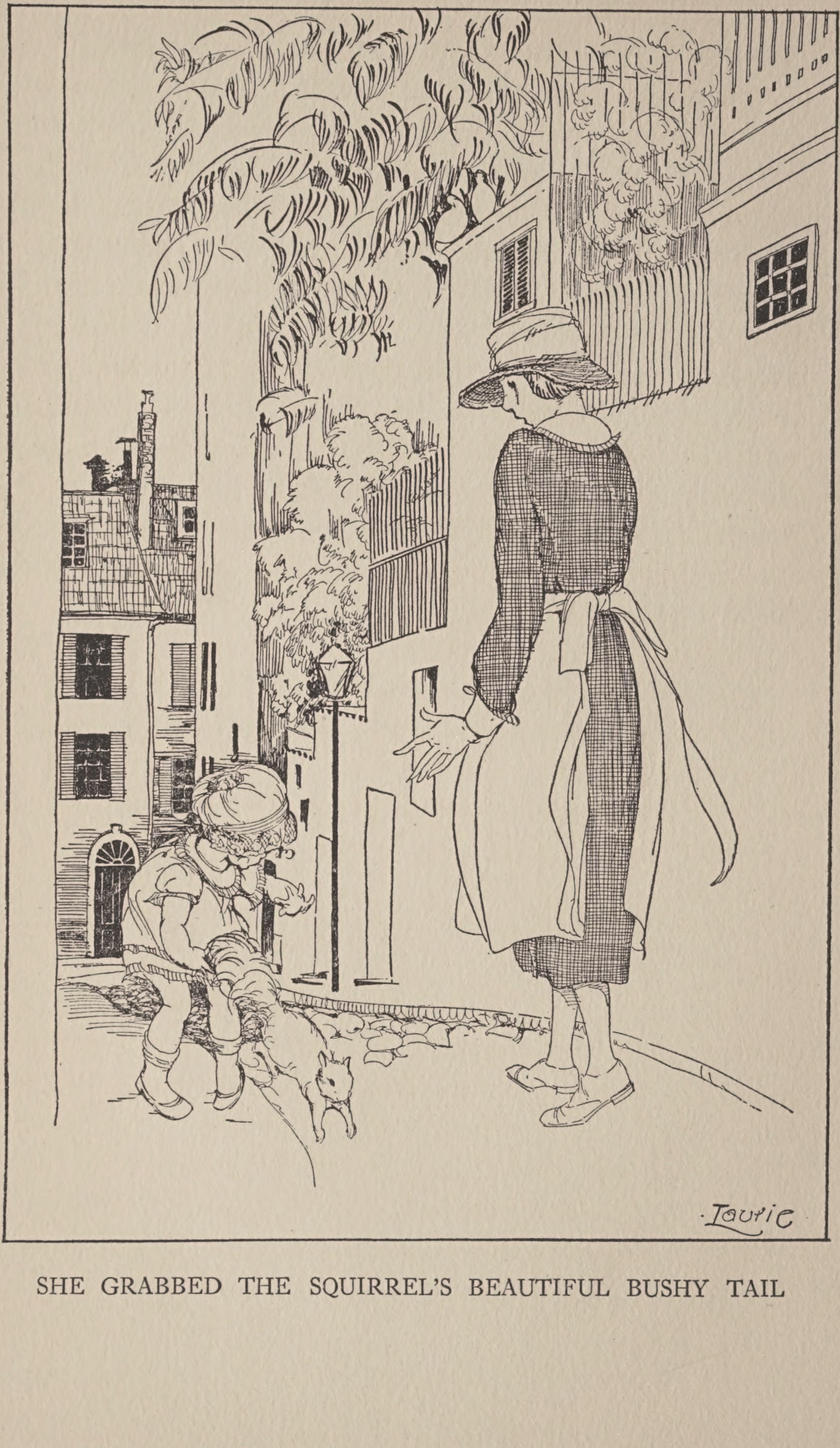
The Pixie wore an air of quiet triumph when he appeared in Wendell's room that evening. So did Wendell.

" Well," said the Pixie. " Do you give up this time ? "

" Not this time," said Wendell, quietly but with great enjoyment, and he fished the acorn out of his pocket and laid it on the desk in front of the Pixie, who glared at it savagely.

" Well," said Wendell, " are you satisfied ? "

" Oh, yes," said the Pixie, ironically. " It's an acorn. I know an acorn when I see one, thank you. But there aren't any oaks on Acorn Street."



SHE GRABBED THE SQUIRREL'S BEAUTIFUL BUSHY TAIL

" I know it. But a squirrel brought it all the way from the Public Garden and dropped it there. I saw him."

" A common or garden squirrel ? " asked the Pixie incredulously.

" Garden — when I saw him," said Wendell. " But he might live on the Common for all I know."

" Some nutty squirrel," said the Pixie dejectedly, " to block my game that way ! " He sat fingering the acorn as if he hoped it would turn into something else.

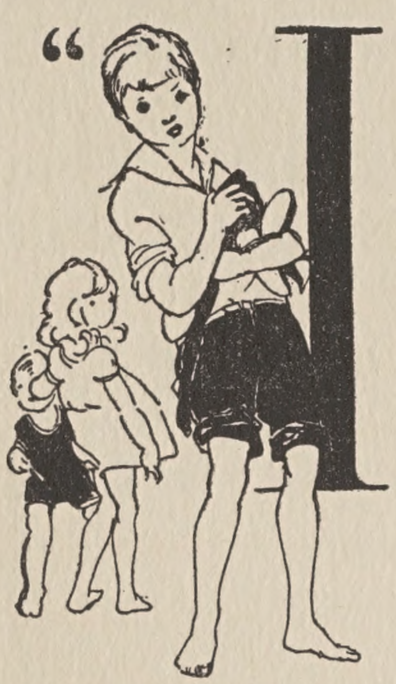
" Ah ! " he said, brightening suddenly. " But I've thought of something for the third test that's a *sticker*."

" What is it ? A postage stamp ? " asked Wendell.

" You won't feel so funny, young man, when you know what it is," said the Pixie, glaring.

CHAPTER V

A FROG SOMEWHAT OUT OF THE COMMON



“I SUPPOSE it’s a beacon from Beacon Hill,” said Wendell.

“Now, that’s not bad,” conceded the Pixie. “I may use that some time. No,” triumphantly, “it’s a frog from the Frog Pond.”

“Je-hoshaphat!” exclaimed Wendell. “You’ve got me this time.”

The Pixie grinned. “I certainly think so,” said he.

For if ever a frog made its lair in the Frog Pond, it was long before the present memory of man. The Frog Pond is a pool on the Beacon Street side of Boston Common. In shape it is somewhat like a lima bean. It has a concrete bottom. Near one end there is a gushing fountain and at the other a drain, that keep the water fresh. In warm weather, hundreds of Boston children “go swimming” there every day,—brown-skinned, black-eyed Italians, little Russian Jews, a small sprinkling of native Bostonians, quite a large handful of little negroes, “Parthians and Medes and Elamites," no doubt, and "the dwellers in Mesopotamia" ; but never, never a frog.

In winter, when the pool is frozen, it is a skating pond, and Flag Staff Hill, just above it, makes an ideal start for a sled to go whizzing down across the icy glare of the Frog Pond. Popular opinion has it that it was this very slide on the Common that was made famous in the winter of 1774 and 1775 by the contest between the youngsters of Boston and General Gage's redcoats, then quartered on the town, who tried to spoil the slide with sand and ashes. Instead of submitting timidly, the boys carried their complaint to General Gage himself, who assured them that they should be undisturbed in future and said in comment, "How can we hope to beat the notion of liberty out of this people ? The very boys breathe the air of liberty !"

Historical truth compels me to state, however, that the Frog Pond was not the scene of this interesting passage. It was undoubtedly on School Street, in the neighborhood of the historic Latin School, that the boys' slide was spoiled, and it was done by the servant of General Haldimand, who was in command under General Gage, though General Gage was indeed the court of appeal that decided in favor of the Latin School boys. As to the servant, I think his idea was a good one, for I have disastrously tried to walk down School Street myself on an icy day.

But if the Frog Pond was not the actual site of this historic strike for liberty, it may be called the direct spiritual descendant of whatever frozen pool had that honor. For the boys and girls of the Frog Pond in these modern days "breathe the air of liberty"; and the grown people of Boston know it, and the police know it. The Frog Pond, within close view of the Massachusetts State House, within three minutes' walk of Boston's financial center, and within a stone's throw of the shopping district, belongs exclusively to the youngsters. Any grown person may occupy a bench on the walk and watch the fun, but he mustn't complain if he happens to get splashed. Neither must he object to large groups of girls and boys all around him, struggling to exchange wet bathing suits for dry clothes without the shelter of a dressing room. The youngsters are required to put on their bathing suits at home; but after the swim who can be expected to traverse blocks and blocks of city streets in a wet bathing suit? They do the best they can to create for themselves a privacy that doesn't exist. They bring newspapers and old blankets and sit under them on the grass to dress; they form close rings around each other at critical moments; and the Mayor of Boston consents, because he is very human and very sensible; and the Common police, who have all known the delights of the Frog Pond and the difficulties of dressing in public in their own boyhood days, turn their backs; and the majority of staid Boston citizens, walking home to dinner past the Pond after office hours, approves genially, and is of the opinion that the small minority that disapproves would better walk home by some other path.

To the Frog Pond, then, Wendell bent his steps the following afternoon. He wore his bathing suit under his shirt and trousers, though it was somewhat late in the season for bathing. The warm weather had brought out a number of adventurous souls, Sammy Davis among them.

"Hi, Wendell, come on in," yelled Sammy.

"How is it?" asked Wendell.

"Fine! Warm as can be."

Wendell didn't believe it. He knew the old trick of telling the newest comer how warm the water is. He stood undecided on the brick walk.

"Seen any frogs in there, Sammy?" he asked.

Of course it was a foolish question, but it popped out before he could check it.

"Frogs? Naw!" said Sammy in exaggerated denial.

"Frogs! Yah!" said the other boys, and hooted in derision.

"I seen a frog," piped up a bright-eyed colored baby in a bathing suit improvised from underclothes, who sat on the stone curb and paddled his wriggling brown feet in the water.

"Seen a frog! Yes, like fun you did," jeered his big brother.

"I did seen a frog," reiterated the baby. "There, on the grass. There he is now."

Wendell looked where the brown finger pointed. Could he believe his eyes? There on the grassy slope of the hill below the Soldiers' Monument actually sat and blinked a green and speckled frog.

The brown baby and Wendell were not the only people who had seen him. A shout went up from the water, and at the same time an echoing shout arose from a group of small boys who were climbing around on a captured German tank on the crest of the hill. The boys on the tank began to scramble down.

The frog sat and blinked stupidly. It seemed dazed or injured, but as the tank contingent cast themselves down the hill, it leaped with that surprising suddenness that characterizes frogs, and with its long legs shooting behind, plunged head first down the slope and into the water. For the first time within the memory of this generation, there was *a frog in the Frog Pond.*

Wendell cast off his clothes and shoes and shot in after it. Whew ! but the water was cold ! And how to locate the frog ? A needle in a hay stack couldn't compare with it.

Excitement reigned in the Frog Pond. Every one gave chase. The water was not clear enough to show the reptile plainly, but occasional glimpses of it spurred on its hunters. They made futile grabs below the water ; they swam and dove after that frog. Several times some boy's hand closed over it, only to find its slippery length wriggling through his fingers. At length it was captured by Izzy Icklebaum, who brought it triumphantly to the surface and held it in a tight grasp.

" Oh, Izzy, give it to me," begged Wendell. " I'll give you anything you want for it."

Izzy lent a business-like ear to this offer.

" You will, eh ? " he said, showing a large degree of interest. " Will you give me your aeroplane ? "

In spite of his deep regret, there was not even a moment's hesitation on Wendell's part.

" It's yours," he said. " Here, give us the frog here in my stocking. Put your hands 'way in with him. That's the big idea. Now I've got him."

Released by Izzy, the frog gave a futile leap, only to find itself entangled in the stocking foot. The capture was complete. Wendell put on his clothes over his wet bathing suit, slipped his feet stockingless into his shoes, slung the frog over his shoulder and started for home.

" I'll come in for it this aft.," shouted Izzy after him.

" Right-o," returned Wendell over his shoulder, and sped on, his heart lightened of a tremendous burden, the last of the three tasks accomplished.

True to his word, Izzy came over an hour later and bore off the aeroplane. Wendell tried not to care. He pinched the frog gently through the stocking to make sure it was there, and anticipated the Pixie's disappointment.

The Pixie certainly was surprised. Wendell handed him the stocking and told him to feel inside, and when the Pixie's hand came in contact with the cold smooth skin of the frog, it gave the Pixie his first shock. He got his second when Froggy, catching a glimpse of light through the opening, leaped violently out, almost in the Pixie's face.

" Well, I suppose that's settled," said the Pixie, when the frog had finally come to rest in a corner of the room. " You really found it in the Frog Pond ? "

" Yes, I did," said Wendell, " really and truly. So now I've finished the tasks, I'm glad to say."

" Well, I must say it's a great relief to me," returned the Pixie. " I never do know what to do with boys when I find them belonging to me. It's a great responsibility. I'm glad I'm not a mother."

In spite of his relief, the Pixie continued to look gloomy and to fiddle uneasily with a pencil on Wendell's desk. At last he broke out :

" Of course, I'm not doubting your word, but you know and I know that you couldn't find a frog in the Frog Pond because there aren't any."

" But this one really was," said Wendell, distressed to see that the Pixie was not quite convinced that he spoke the truth. " I saw him jump in myself, and Izzy Icklebaum fished him out."

" Well, it's very fishy ! I can't account for it," said the Pixie.

He remained in a brown study for several seconds ; then a bright thought illumined his little old face.

" I have it. I bet I have it. Which side did the frog jump in from ? "

" Why, it came jumping down the hill from the Soldiers' Monument. When I first saw it, it was near the top of the hill."

" Of course it was ! " cried the Pixie, slapping his leg. " That's where the old Kobold lives. This is just like his work. He never had an original idea in his life."

" You mean — ? " questioned Wendell.

" I mean this isn't a real frog at all. It's a person changed into a frog — by enchantment, you know. He's always doing it, pulling that frog stuff. Why, I can count one, two, three — seven times anyway he's used that same spell since Cinderella's godmother first suggested it. I should think he'd be tired of it himself."

The frog sat and blinked at them with its goggle eyes. Wendell didn't like its stare. He began to feel uneasy. Suppose it *was* enchanted. Suppose it should go back to its natural shape. He somehow felt sure he shouldn't like that shape, whatever it might be.

"Of course, this complicates things for you a bit," said the Pixie briskly.

"For me?" faltered Wendell.

"Yes, you'll have to break the spell, you know. You seem to forget this is your fairy story, young man."

"But how?" queried Wendell. "It seems to me this business of living in a fairy story is just nothing but getting out of the frying pan into the fire."

"Well, you wished it, you know," said the Pixie. He uncrossed his legs, crossed them the other way, gazed around the room, hummed a little tune. He seemed to be washing his hands of all responsibility.

"Sometimes if you throw a frog against a wall it will do it," volunteered the Pixie. He spoke as if he had no interest in the matter.

"Do what?" asked Wendell.

"Break the spell, of course."

Wendell hated to do it. He didn't like the frog, to be sure, but that was no reason for hurting it. However, he advanced, under the compulsion of the Pixie's words, grasped the smooth, cold creature, and hurled it against the wall — then jumped back startled.

CHAPTER VI

THE STORY OF THE ENCHANTED MAIDEN

IN place of the frog, before him stood a beauteous maiden. She had a dazzlingly clear complexion, big infantile blue eyes, and a wealth of golden hair which she wore so as to conceal her ears. She was dressed simply but charmingly in a sport blouse and skirt, silk stockings and low shoes.

" Jumping caterpillars ! " ejaculated the Pixie. " I guessed right."

" You are naturally surprised," said the Beauteous Maiden, in a low melodious voice, " to see me in place of that odious frog. I cannot tell you how grateful I am to you for giving me back my natural form, though it can be only for a brief time."

" Have a chair," said Wendell as soon as he could recover from the shock.

" Thank you," said the maiden, seating herself and gracefully crossing one knee over the other. " As the story of my life is a long one and my time is short, I will begin it at once."

" Once upon a time there lived a maiden who was so beautiful and so good that everyone loved her. That maiden, of course, was myself. While I was still an infant, my mother died and my father married again. He chose for his second wife a woman who had a daughter of my own age. For many years we were a happy household, but after a time my stepmother was transformed into a cruel witch by the magic charms of an old Kobold."

" Hold on ! " cried the Pixie. " Does he live under Flag Staff Hill on the Common ? "

" He does," said the Beauteous Maiden.

" There, didn't I tell you this thing was mixed up with him ? " said the Pixie, turning triumphantly to Wendell. " I can always pick out his style."

" The old Kobold," went on the Beauteous Maiden, " gave my stepmother three magic gifts. The first was a cloak that rendered the wearer invisible. The second was a cap, and whoever put it on could read the thoughts of those about him. The third was a book of spells, containing all the spells and charms ordinarily used by magicians. The old Kobold decreed that my stepmother should remain under his spell as long as she held these gifts in her possession ; but if she should be robbed of them, she would lose her base powers as a witch and be restored to her original virtuous self."

" I see your work cut out for you," said the Pixie in a low aside to Wendell.

" I cannot tell you," continued the Beauteous Maiden, " what a wretched life I led from this time on. I was dressed in rags, had only cold scraps to eat, and was forced to do the most menial work of the house, while my stepsister wore beautiful clothes and went to balls every night."

"Why didn't your father stop it?" put in Wendell. "I've always wondered about that in these stepmother stories — why the father stood for it."

"I was coming to that," said the Beauteous Maiden graciously. "My father died soon after his second marriage, and my stepmother married again."

"I see," said the Pixie thoughtfully. "She took a step farther."

"Yes," assented the Beauteous Maiden, "and he was a horrible giant whose favorite diet was little boys. In addition, my stepmother made life a burden to me by her magic arts. She spied upon all my actions with the Cloak of Darkness, and she spied upon all my thoughts with the Cap of Thought, and she was constantly using her Book of Spells to annoy me. When I was making doughnuts, she would change the rolling pin into an eel which would wriggle away from me, and annoying things of that kind. My stepsister, too, once as dear to me as my own sister could have been, seemed to come gradually under the Kobold's spell. While every one admired and loved me for my youth, innocence, and beauty, she was so jealous that she constantly sought to do me an injury. At length, matters came to a climax. One of the Boston papers held a beauty contest, and, all unknown to me, a good neighbor sent in my photograph in competition. It had been advertised that the winner of the contest would be offered a contract with one of the moving-picture companies as a prize, but I knew nothing of it. Judge, then, of my surprise and delight, when a reporter for the paper called to say that I had won the competition and with it the contract as a movie star. But my joy was equalled only by the rage of my cruel stepmother and the jealousy of my ugly stepsister. They resolved that I should never sign that contract, and my stepmother sent me at once with a letter to be delivered to the old Kobold, requesting him to put the bearer to death.

"This horrible design would doubtless have been carried out, but on the way to Boston I sat down to rest for a few moments in the Fenway and fell asleep. While I was asleep, a Metropolitan Park policeman happened that way, and stood transfixed at the sight of my beauty. Noticing the letter, which I held in my hand, he took it, opened and read it, and was shocked beyond measure at the dreadful fate designed for me. He cast about for means to avert it, and at length wrote another letter, requesting the Kobold to change the bearer into a fairy, and substituted this letter for the original one. Soon after, I awoke and went on my way, all unconscious of these events. I presented the letter to the Kobold, who immediately used his magic charm to transform me. Unfortunately, the policeman did not write a very legible hand. The Kobold read *frog* for *fairy* and changed me to the horrible form in which you first beheld me."

"There's a lesson for you, young man," said the Pixie severely. "You don't write any too good a hand yourself."

"My time is short," went on the Beauteous Maiden. "The courage and devotion of my rescuer," she turned a sad little smile on Wendell, who wriggled uncomfortably, "has made it possible for me to resume my natural form for a short time, in order to tell my story, but soon I must return to the shape of a frog. So I will tell you of the further task that lies before you.

"You must go alone at midnight to the hill where the Kobold dwells, and summon him forth by saying these magic words : —

"*Green hill, green hill, open to me.*
I would the wise old Kobold see."

"Well, if that isn't conceited ! " said the Pixie scornfully. "Of all the nonsense ! 'The wise old Kobold' ! My word ! "

"When the Kobold comes out, you must tell him that you have come to rescue the Beauteous Maiden and inquire his terms. He will ask you to perform a task for him, and when it is completed, I shall be free."

"I know just what he'll ask you, too," put in the Pixie. "Same superannuated stuff ! He'll ask you to guess his name."

"Well, what is his name ? " asked Wendell, looking from the Pixie to the Beauteous Maiden and back again.

"How should I know ? " shrugged the Pixie. "He doesn't know, himself, really. He stuck to Rumpelstiltskin a few hundred years, but lately he changes it every time. He has to, you know, because he always gives it away, himself, spinning 'round on one leg. That's just how much sense he has."

"Which side of the hill, I wonder," went on Wendell, turning to the Beauteous Maiden, but to his startled surprise, she had vanished, and there sat the frog, as green, as goggle-eyed, as unintelligent, as altogether repulsive as if it had never won a beauty contest in its life.

CHAPTER VII

WENDELL WORKS THE MIDNIGHT SPELL

“HOW did she get that way ? ” he asked the Pixie, who only smiled gleefully and returned, “ It’s a great life, isn’t it, this fairy story business ! ”

“ Well, I suppose I’ve got to do it,” said the harassed boy. “ How I’m ever going to stay awake till midnight, I don’t see.”

“ Oh, I’ll wake you, my boy,” said the Pixie obligingly. “ You go to bed.”

“ And what am I going to do with him — with her ? ” pursued Wendell, pointing vindictively to the frog. “ Now I know what she is, I’ve got to make her comfortable somewhere. She can’t sleep in a stocking.”

The frog blinked and stared at him. Wendell stared back gloomily. He wondered if different frogs looked different to each other, like boys and dogs. It seemed to him that this frog was particularly ugly, even judged by frog standards of beauty. Well, poor thing ! that was probably the Kobold’s fault.

"I know what I'll do with her," he said. "I'll put her in the guest chamber for the night. She'll like that. Virginia's away overnight."

It wasn't very easy to catch the frog. It eluded Wendell with long-legged leaps, but Wendell cornered it at last, with the help of the Pixie, and carried it, its little heart pulsating with fright, to the dainty room that Cousin Virginia occupied, and tucked it into bed.

"One good job done," said Wendell to himself. "I won't have to sleep with *that* in the room tonight."

"Well, old chap, I guess I'll go to bed now," he said, yawning, to the Pixie, "and if you *will* call me, say about eleven-thirty, I'll be much obliged."

As he slid under the bed clothes and sprawled out in solid comfort, his foot touched something cold, clammy, repellent. He barely repressed a shriek. He threw back the bed clothes. Yes, the frog again!

"Now, how did he ever get there?" cried Wendell in bewilderment. "I'm sure he couldn't open the door. It *is* magic, for sure."

"*She*, you mean. You can't shake her," rejoined the Pixie maliciously. "It's your fairy tale, you know, and you are The Rescuer."

"Well, what shall I do with her now?" asked Wendell in despair. "Do you suppose she'd stay here if I went into Cousin Virginia's room?"

"Not for a moment," said the Pixie. "I tell you. You put her under the down puff, on the foot of the bed, and I'll keep an eye on her."

It seemed about five minutes after Wendell was in bed, when he awoke suddenly and found that the Pixie was pounding him severely.

" Hold on ! Hold on ! " he called. " What's the matter ? "

" The matter is, I've been trying for the last ten minutes to wake you," said the Pixie, exasperated. " The Sleeping Beauty had nothing on you. Hurry up, now, or you won't get there at midnight."

Wendell tumbled into his clothes and tiptoed, as noiselessly as in him lay, down the broad old-fashioned stairs, and still another flight to the basement. He did not dare risk the noise of the front door, so he emerged from the kitchen into the back alley, and thence to the street. Not a person was in sight. Only a black and white cat prowled the gutters. A strange silence covered the city. Even the surging, seething roar of West End children at play, which rises all the evening, was stilled. Wendell's running footsteps, beating rhythmic time on the brick pavement of Old Boston, alone broke the stillness. No traffic policemen presided over Beacon Street. He gained the Common, skirted the Frog Pond, and faced Flag Staff Hill and, brave boy though he was, he did tremble in his boots.

The frequent electric lights along the thoroughfares that bound the Common drew glowing lines of light around it ; and there were bright lights at the intersection of the walks. But here, on the gentle slope of Flag Staff Hill, under the tall elms, a great black shadow lay. No Boston boy, born and reared among the historic traditions of the Commonwealth, but knows the somber legend of this site, that under this soil lie buried the Quakers and the pirates whom Puritan zeal executed on this spot in the early days of the colony. Cold chills ran up and down Wendell's spine as he stood here in the shadow and listened for the stroke of midnight. Presently it boomed forth from the old church on Mount Vernon Street — the same metal voice that struck the hour to the poet Longfellow when he stood on the bridge at midnight. Now was the fateful moment! And do you know, whether it was magic or whether it was scare I can't say, but Wendell couldn't for the life of him remember that charm that was to summon the Kobold! The striking of the clock, bringing with it the memory of that well known poem which he had learned in school, had driven every bit of verse out of his mind, except his Cousin Virginia's irreverent version of the same poem: —

> "*I stood on the bridge at midnight,*
> *As the clocks were striking three,*
> *And a cabman drove across the bridge*
> *And hitched his horse to me.*"

On the eleventh stroke of the old church bell, the Park Street Church at Brimstone Corner took up the echo. Wendell by a mighty effort recalled the charm before the second sonorous voice had died on the still air.

> "*Green hill, green hill, open to me.*
> *I would the wise old Kobold see,*"

repeated Wendell.

Suddenly another electric light on the path below sprang into brightness, and sent a light streak across the shadow of the elms. For a moment Wendell fancied, and decided that it must be only fancy, that the ground trembled slightly under his feet. Then, before his eyes there came a crack in the earth, as if a giant seed were germinating and pushing up a shoot. The crack widened. It became a tunnel extending apparently into the very heart of the hill ; and suddenly, like a cut moving-picture film that jerks a sudden change upon the screen, he saw that the mouth of the tunnel was occupied by an unexpected grotesque figure that could be none other than the Kobold.

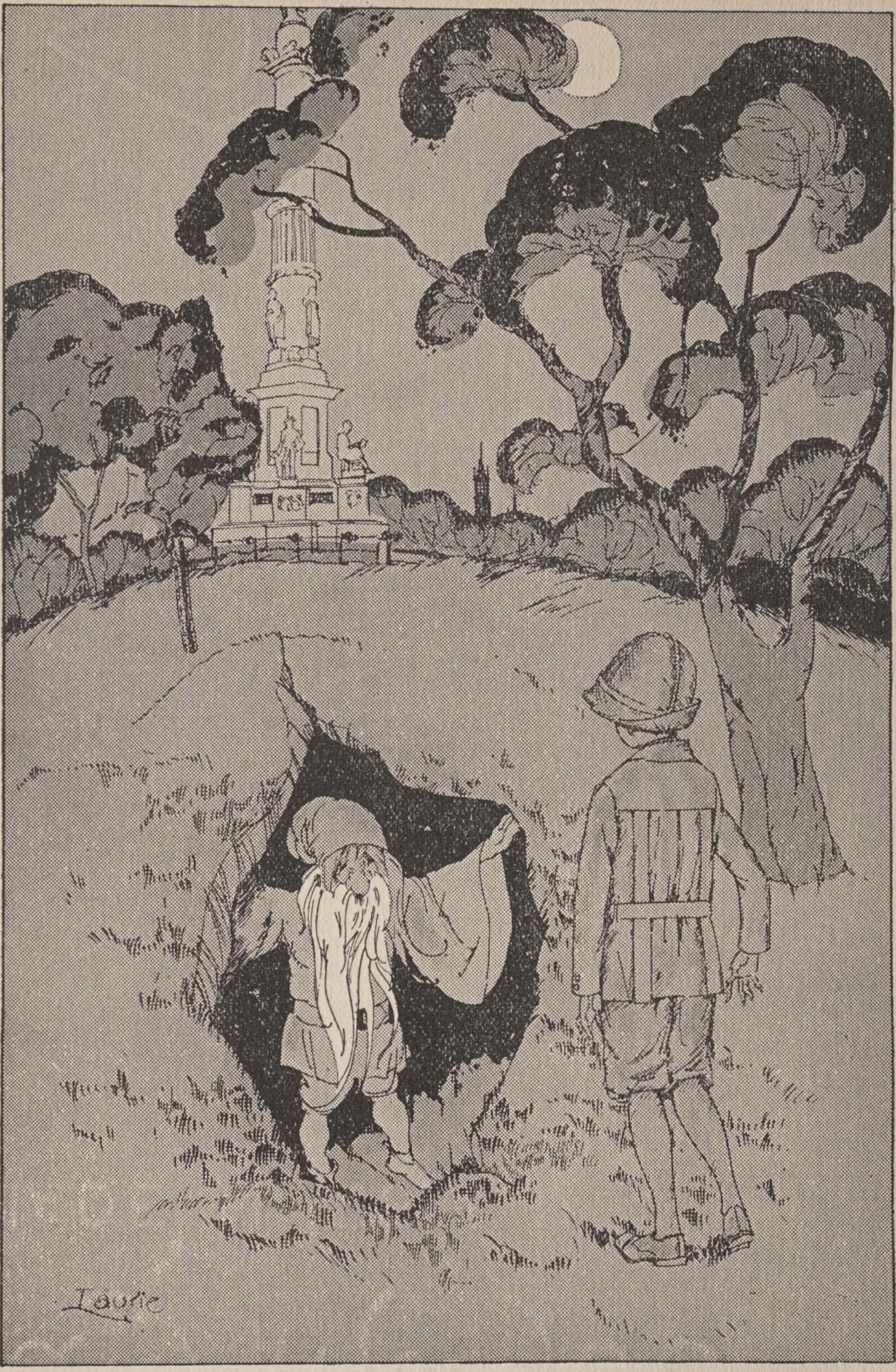
Wendell had expected that the Kobold would look somewhat like the Pixie, but they had nothing in common except smallness of stature. The Kobold was about the size of a six-year-old, and had white hair and white whiskers and a very long white beard that reached to his waist. He appeared to be wearing a belted velvet suit, with full sleeves and breeches, and he was very stout and stocky.

" Who summons me ? " he said with dignity.

" I do," said Wendell advancing boldly, now that there was need for action. " I should like to know how to free the Beauteous Maiden from your spell."

The Kobold chuckled grimly — an exclusive sort of chuckle that made Wendell feel very much out of the joke.

" If you wish to win the Maiden's freedom," he said slowly, " you will first have to guess a riddle. You may have three chances to give the answer. If you guess correctly on any one of those trials, the Maiden shall be restored to her original form. If



"WHO SUMMONS ME?" SAID THE KOBOLD

you fail, she shall still remain a frog, and you too shall be transformed into another shape at my will."

"Good gracious!" cried Wendell. "Is there as much to it as all that? I'm not going to be changed into anything at anybody's will. You can keep your old riddle and your frog, too, for all of me." He turned to go.

"Stay!" cried the Kobold, so he stayed to listen.

"I might add," said the Kobold, "that while the above terms are my regular ones, I might make a slight reduction in your case, as business is particularly dull just now. Indeed, to be candid, it is nearly a hundred years since I have had any opportunity to hold this guessing contest."

"Well, how much of a reduction?" asked Wendell. "Will you leave out the part about transforming me? Say, if I win, the frog changes back to the Maiden, and if I lose, it stays a frog?"

"No, no," returned the Kobold. "Such is not my method of doing business. The princes that have entered this contest in times past have at least agreed to be transformed for a limited time."

"Not for a moment, for me," said Wendell. "Times have changed."

"A week, say," urged the Kobold. "I tell you frankly I shall not release the Maiden for less, and if she is not released before one more year is run, she will be turned into a loathly dragon for life."

"Well, make it a week, then," said Wendell sulkily.

"Agreed!" said the Kobold. "Here, then, is the riddle you must answer: — *What is Boston?*"

Without a moment's hesitation, just as promptly as if he had been asked his own name, Wendell replied in Dr. Holmes' words, as any Boston boy would,

" Boston is the Hub of the Universe."

" Wrong ! Wrong ! " chuckled the Kobold maliciously. " I knew you'd say that. But there is another answer."

" Well," said the crestfallen Wendell, " I'll go home and think it over. And say, do I have to come at midnight every time ? It's mighty hard to sneak out just then."

" No, I will make an appointment with you for any time you say," returned the Kobold obligingly. " Morning, evening, whatever you wish."

" Let's make it eight o'clock in the morning," said Wendell. " I could drop in here on the way to school."

" To-morrow ? " asked the Kobold.

" N-no," hesitated Wendell. " I'll need a little time on this thing."

" I'll wager you will," chuckled the old Kobold, growing almost slangy in his dignified glee.

" Say the day after to-morrow," suggested Wendell.

" Agreed ! " said the Kobold. " You will find me here outside the hill. And mind you bring back that frog. It is not your property, you must remember."

" I will. I'll be glad to," returned Wendell hurriedly. The frog was already on his nerves.

" And only two more guesses," added the Kobold.

"I know," said Wendell meekly. He was very much mortified to have failed so quickly through his own assurance. He went back through the silent streets, let himself in quietly and bolted the back door, took off his shoes and groped up to his room, where the Pixie sat awaiting him.

CHAPTER VIII

COUSIN VIRGINIA HAS A CALLER

“WELL, you deserved to lose,” said the Pixie when he had heard the whole story, “answering right off like that on the spur of the moment. You have to think these things over a bit. Besides, the Hub has been moving slowly westward since Holmes’ time. It’s nearer Chicago, now, I believe. But what did I tell you about old White-Hairs ? Isn’t he a back number ? Trying to do business in the twentieth century the way he used to do it with those princes in slashed doublets ! Why doesn’t he wake up and hear the birdies sing ? ”

“ How’s the frog ? ” asked Wendell anxiously.

“ An awful nuisance,” responded the Pixie frankly. “ I think she’s thirsty but she won’t drink.”

“ Oh, they can’t drink, you know,” explained Wendell. “ They take it in through the skin. That mug is too small. Here, I’ll fill the basin and put her in.”

That seemed to content the frog. It sat and soaked and absorbed and goggled at Wendell, who regarded it moodily.

"If I can't do anything more for you," said the Pixie, "I'll move on. Hope you guess the riddle."

"Thanks, old fellow," said Wendell soberly. He was very sleepy and discouraged. But the frog looked a bit cheerier.

Hardly was Wendell in bed when he dropped off to sleep, and five minutes later, blop! the frog leaped from the basin and landed on the boy's face, all wet and soggy and cold. Wendell, half asleep, struck out in self-defense, and landed a whacking blow on the poor reptile, that sent it halfway across the room. He realized instantly what he had done, and much ashamed of himself, he turned on the light, located the panting frog, and tucked it under the down quilt at the foot of the bed. Bitterly he regretted that he had not made an appointment with the Kobold to return the creature the very next morning.

When he left for school, he hid the frog away again in his stocking, in a chiffonier drawer, but even his preoccupation with the Boston riddle did not entirely obliterate his uneasy fear that the frog might escape or be turned out of the house in his absence, and thus plunge him into some other awful rescuing problem.

He had hoped that the geography or history or literature lesson might enlighten him on the definition of Boston, and his attention to study was so strict that his teachers thought best to watch him even more closely than usual, to forestall whatever mischief must be brewing. But no ray of light came to him from any of his lessons. He went home despondently, assured himself that the frog was still safe, and went out to play with cheerful Sammy Davis and the other fellows. It seemed a long while since he, too, had been a care-free, whistling boy, with no greater anxiety than being kept after school for fractions, or being chased by Sammy's cross janitor.

He had almost forgotten his troubles when he went in to dinner, but as soon as he ascended to his room to study they all came back, for there sat the frog on his table, popping its eyes out at him most unpleasantly.

"I guess I'll study downstairs," he thought. "I'll have the library to myself tonight. Mother and Father have gone to the Symphony, and I guess Cousin Virginia's out somewhere."

He settled down comfortably in the library, and was getting on famously with his lessons when the bell rang and a masculine voice asked for his Cousin Virginia. She came down presently and a lively conversation began in the front room just out of sight but not out of sound of Wendell. He managed, however, to keep his mind on his work, for it was very silly talk and not at all interesting. The man was a Harvard student from New York, and they chattered on about strangers to Wendell whom they knew in common.

"Do you like Boston ?" Wendell heard the man say, and Virginia's clear and rather high-pitched voice answered,

"Of course I like Boston. I'll put it more strongly, I thoroughly enjoy Boston. I never supposed any place could be so — so historical, so absolutely, thoroughly, naively, unselfconsciously historical. Why, even little Wendell — ”

“ She needn’t *little* me,” thought Wendell savagely.

“ — invited me to see a play he was to be in, in school, and what *do* you suppose ? it was Revolutionary. All about hiding away a wounded soldier, with allusions to the British encamped on Boston Common, and the tax on tea. I don’t believe Boston knows anything has happened in history since the Boston Tea Party.”

“ You’ve said it,” said the young man, who seemed to admire Virginia very much.

“ And their holidays,” went on the foolish girl. “ When I was here last spring, I went out to shop on the nineteenth of April, and would you believe it ? the shops were closed. Patriots’ Day, if you please, when the farmers fired the shot heard round the world ! I came in and said to Auntie, ‘ Do you by any chance have a holiday in Boston on the fourth of July, Auntie ? ’ ‘ Why, yes, dear,’ she said, ‘ of course.’ I said, ‘ But why ? It isn’t Emerson’s birthday, is it ? ’ and she said, ‘ Why, my dear, you must know it is Independence Day.’ ‘ Oh, yes, Auntie,’ I said, ‘ but why celebrate it in Boston ? That little event was pulled off in Philadelphia. Hasn’t Boston enough ? ’ ”

“ Ha, ha ! ” laughed the young man. “ That was a good one on Boston.”

“ But the greatest pleasure I’ve had is the baked beans,” she went on.

"Pleasure!" echoed the young man. "No *pleasure*, surely."

"Oh, I mean *mental* pleasure, to find they really *are*, you know, and not merely a myth. Of course, I believed before I came here that they existed here, but as an occasional article of diet. Why, they are a religious rite, an article of faith! Every Saturday night!"

"Yes, and every Sunday morning breakfast at my boarding house," groaned the young man.

"Impossible! Inhuman!" said Virginia brightly.

"Inhuman, but true," moaned the young man.

Wendell thought he had never heard such idiocy in his life. Delicious baked beans!

"But they not only *eat* them — they take them seriously," Virginia's silly little voice ran on. "I made a light and unworthy remark to one of Auntie's friends about the sacred bean. She looked at me compassionately and then said gravely, 'We always bake them with a small onion in the bottom of the pot.' Yes, I don't know who said it first, but it is absolutely true that Boston *is* a state of mind."

Wendell, listening with the utmost scorn to these trivialities, was suddenly brought up short.

Boston is a state of mind.

Three rousing cheers for Cousin Virginia!

He went to bed happy that night. Even the presence of the loathsome frog was endurable. Tomorrow he would return the creature to the Kobold, and at the same time fling the answer to his riddle in his teeth — if he had any teeth. It would seem probable that a Kobold with so much white beard would be too old to have teeth.

The Kobold was waiting for him on the slope of Flag Staff Hill next morning. So cleverly did his velvet suit take on the soft tone of the elm trunks, that no one of the busy passersby, hurrying on to business through the Common, discerned him there under the trees, though Wendell saw him clearly. Or was it that he made himself invisible to other eyes ?

" I've brought your frog," said Wendell, drawing a long breath. He handed the stocking over to the Kobold, and the frog leaped out and vanished among the fallen leaves.

" What *is* Boston ? " asked the Kobold mockingly.

" Boston," said Wendell with assurance, " is a state of mind."

" Wrong ! Wrong ! " jeered the Kobold — and was no longer there. But a little breeze rustled in the elm trees and brought a faint hissing message to Wendell's ears, just as the rushes whispered the fatal secret of the barber of King Midas : —

" One more chance ! One more chance ! "

Wendell went on dejectedly to school.

CHAPTER IX

THE BREAKING OF THE CHARM

SEVERAL days passed by. No inspiration came to Wendell. The Pixie had no suggestion to offer, only unsympathetic criticism : — " You might have known that was too subtle for him. He's no deep thinker. *I* could have told you." His mother grew anxious. " You mustn't study so hard, dear," she said. " You should have been out playing with the boys instead of poring over that Memorial History of Boston this afternoon. Yes, I know it is fascinating reading, especially the earlier chapters, but you must think of your health, dear." Cousin Virginia looked at Wendell solicitously, and Wendell knew she meant to be funny again.

This was Saturday evening, and the family had just settled down in the library with the *Transcript*, each with a section. Alden had the news ; Otis, the sporting page ; his father was perusing the editorials, his mother was reading the religious items. Cousin Virginia dabbled a few moments in the theatrical columns, like a canary unwilling to get wet all over in his china tub, and then laid down her section, suppressed a yawn, and said,

"Why does all Boston find its greatest dissipation Saturday night in reading the Saturday evening *Transcript*?"

"Habit, pure habit," growled Alden, without raising his eyes.

"Not altogether habit," said his mother, gently and seriously. "The *Transcript*, Virginia, is quite different from any other paper. It is reliable and conservative and sound."

"You know, Virginia" — her uncle looked up for a moment with a twinkle in his eye — "good Bostonians always make a point of dying on Friday, so that their obituaries can go into the Saturday evening *Transcript*."

"No? That *is* consistent," laughed Virginia. "But even the Boston children quote it. I saw the funniest little chap as I was crossing the Common to-day — a short fat little fellow, having a lot of fun with a false beard and whiskers. He was twirling around on one leg, to get dizzy, I suppose, and chanting loudly something like this, that didn't make any sense: —

"'*The boy — will soon — belong — to me,*
Unless — the Trans — cript *he — should see.*
Ha! Ha! — the ed — ito — rial page
He'll nev — er read — until — old age!'

Would you believe it? I never would — outside of Boston."

Wendell listened no further. He could hardly wait for his father to drop the editorial section. What a foolish old Kobold ! — giving the whole thing away, just as the Pixie said he always did. Thank goodness !

Wendell remembered how his nature study teacher had told the class that even the smallest and humblest of creatures has undoubtedly some place in the scheme of things. Even Cousin Virginia had a use in the world, it would seem.

After a long while, Wendell's father laid down the page, and Wendell picked it up inconspicuously. But not too inconspicuously for Cousin Virginia's keen laughing eyes.

" Nice little Boston, Wendell," she whispered to him. " The family picture is complete."

Wendell read the page through carefully, every word, — the weather, the leaders, the paragraphs, the Nomad, Letters to the Editor, Facts and Fancies, the deaths, and the advertisements. Not one word that gave light on the definition of Boston. Wendell sat in a brown study. Presently, he went up to his room, hoping the Pixie would be there, and sure enough, he was.

" Sounds very probable," was the Pixie's comment, after Wendell had laid the facts before him. " Of course it doesn't have to be to-night's *Transcript.* In fact it couldn't be. It must have been before he put the riddle to you, anyway. I shouldn't be surprised if you'd hit the bull's-eye this time. That's just the kind of riddle he'd propose — something he read in the paper ! That's just the kind of mind he has. There are some people like that, you know, who think if they see it ‘ in the paper,’ it must be true.”

“ Then,” said Wendell, “ you’d advise looking through the old *Transcripts* till I find it. I could do that, I guess, at the *Transcript* office.”

He had to wait till Monday, of course. Monday afternoon, he went down directly from school to the *Transcript* building, which, fitly enough, occupies the historic site of the birthplace of Benjamin Franklin, the great journalist. The *Transcript* people were most courteous and put their files at Wendell’s disposal. Through editorial page after page floundered Wendell, and if only he could have understood and remembered half that he read, he would have emerged from the newspaper office a complete specimen of the well-read Boston boy, such as his Cousin Virginia pretended to believe he already was. It was nearly dusk before his heart was lightened by a definition of Boston, this one from the pen of Oliver Herford, whom of course Wendell recognized as a delightful contributor to *St. Nicholas*. Mr. Herford, it seemed, was originally a Boston man, though now dwelling in the outlands, and, said Mr. Herford, “ Boston is a center of gravity almost entirely surrounded by Newtons.”

It sounded like sense, though naturally Wendell didn’t quite understand it at first. After he had read it several times, he began to see the point. Encouraged by the views the Pixie had expressed, Wendell decided to stop right in at the Kobold’s on the way home. If he wasn’t on the slope of the hill, or if he remained invisible there, doubtless the spell that worked before would bring him to light again.

But Wendell found no need to use the spell, for the little old Kobold was out in plain sight, at least in plain sight of Wendell, though no one else appeared to notice him in the dusk of evening.

His eye lit up mockingly as Wendell approached.

"I've got it this time," said Wendell. "I found it in the *Transcript*."

"Oh, did you?" said the little old chap with less assurance than he had shown before. "What made you think of looking there?"

Wendell decided not to tell him. "Oh, I read the *Transcript* pretty regularly," he said. "This is the answer:—'Boston is a center of gravity almost entirely surrounded by Newtons.'"

"You are right!" groaned the Kobold. "You are right!" and gnashed his teeth. Wendell was much interested, as he had heard of gnashing one's teeth, but had never seen it done before; besides it cleared up that doubtful point in his mind as to whether the white-bearded Kobold had any teeth.

When the Kobold had finished gnashing, he asked Wendell very respectfully,

"By the way, can you tell me what it means?"

"It's perfectly clear," said Wendell. "You know the Newtons around Boston, West Newton, and Newton Center, and so on. And Isaac Newton was the man who discovered the law of gravity—of falling, you know. And some people do think there's a lot of gravity in Boston—grave conversation, I mean. I have a cousin from New York who thinks so. So it's a fairly good joke, you see."

"No, I do not see," returned the Kobold, grasping his head in both hands, "but it does not matter, I assure you. I shall not use it again under any circumstances. It is too ultra-modern. You may not have guessed it but I am a conservative."

"I guessed the riddle, anyway," maintained Wendell, "so where's the Maiden?"

"She is here," said the Kobold, looking down at the rustling leaves, where Wendell now made out the ugly shape of the frog. "Maiden, you are free."

And there she stood, slim and beautiful in the dusk, and looked at Wendell with the utmost gratitude.

"My deliverer!" she breathed softly.

"I suppose you will have to marry her now," said the Kobold to Wendell. "It is always customary." Wendell was sure there was malice in the old fellow's eye this time.

"Why — why —" he stammered, "we didn't plan that." And the Beauteous Maiden added quickly,

"Not yet. There are my cruel stepmother and the giant to consider. Come, sit with me on yonder bench, and we will discuss the matter." So they moved away and left the Kobold standing there, and that was the last that Wendell saw of *him*, though for all I know, the old fellow may still be living under Flag Staff Hill on Boston Common to this very moment.

"The first thing I must do," said the Beauteous

Maiden, " is to hunt up that moving picture man and sign the contract. Then I shall be independent in case you shouldn't succeed with my family."

" Succeed with your family — how do you mean ? " asked Wendell.

" Why, in case my cruel stepmother should work a charm on you, or in case the giant should eat you up."

" Oh, I see," said Wendell, " I hadn't thought of that."

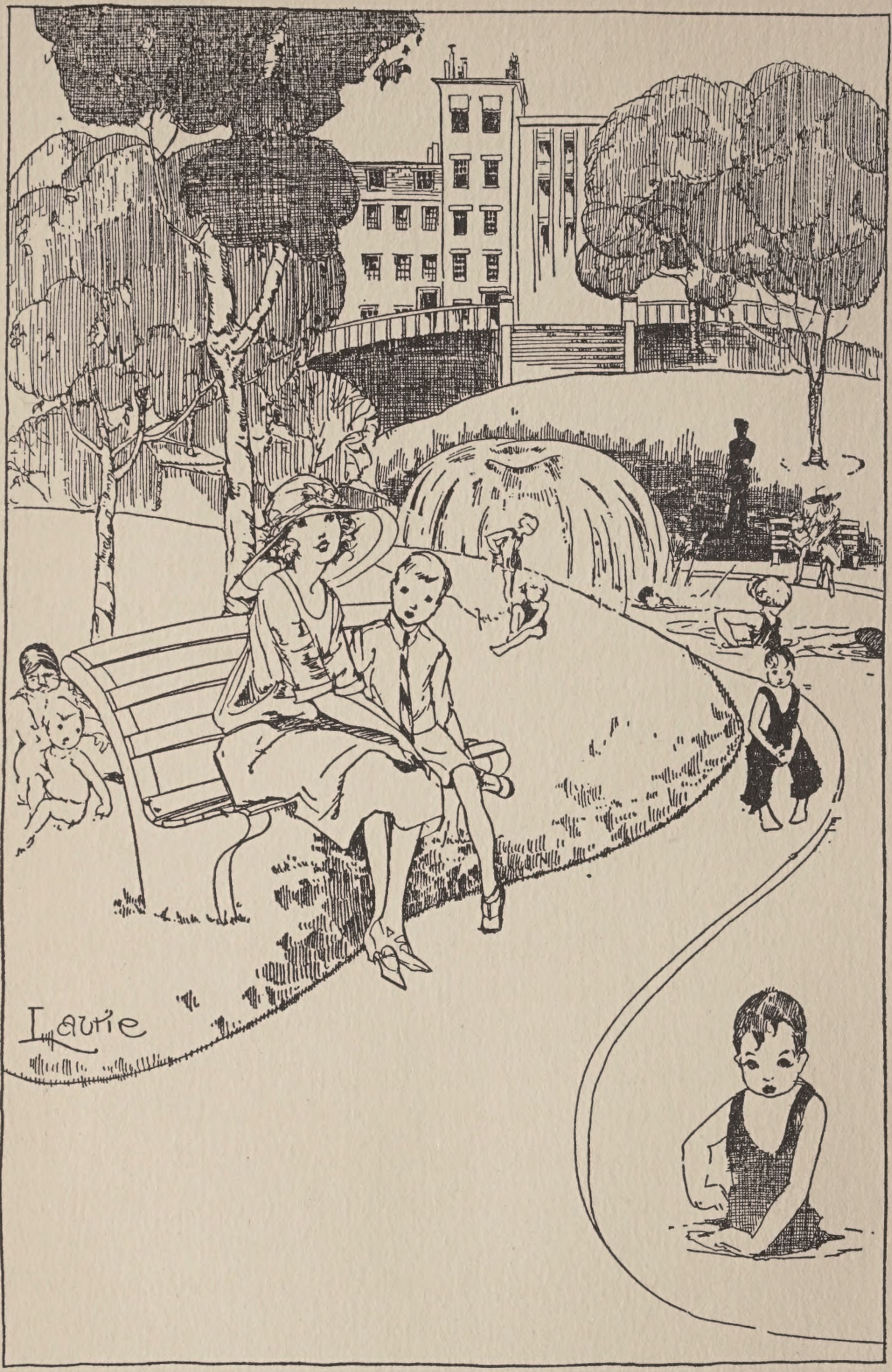
" Well, of course, we'll hope for the best," said the Beauteous Maiden. " Here is the address in Brookline. You take the car from Park Street. You know what you have to do, — rob my stepmother of the three magic gifts that give her her power as a witch, — the Cloak of Darkness, the Cap of Thought and the Book of Spells. The Book of Spells has every charm in the world."

" Why not just take the book then ? " asked Wendell.

Of course, the minute he had asked it, he knew it was a stupid question.

" Because things always go by threes, Silly," said the Beauteous Maiden. " After the witch is powerless, your next task will be to kill the giant ; and the Book of Spells will undoubtedly help you there. Now farewell, dear Deliverer. I must find that movie man."

" Good-bye," said Wendell. He was glad to be alone. He had a great deal to face and a great deal to plan. Besides that, he had been rubbed the wrong way by the Beauteous Maiden, who really



SAID THE BEAUTEOUS MAIDEN, "YOUR NEXT TASK WILL BE TO KILL THE GIANT"

seemed to think it was a small thing for him to be eaten by a giant for her sake. He said as much to the Pixie, who came in that evening, tremendously interested in the answer to the Kobold's riddle, and eager to encourage Wendell in his next adventure.

CHAPTER X

IN THE GIANT'S HOUSE

“OH, yes, it *sounds* easy,” grumbled Wendell. Just walk into a witch’s house and steal her magic cloak. Easy as rolling off a log. Only how am I going to do it, I’d like to know.”

“I might help,” said the Pixie. “I rather like a lark of that kind.”

“Oh, if *you*’d help,” said Wendell. “That would be great. What could you do ?”

“Well, I have some rather neat transformation charms, myself,” said the Pixie. “I suppose if I once got you into the house, you could do the rest.”

“I guess so,” said Wendell. “I could hide in the oven or something.”

“I’ll have to make you pretty small to get into one of these gas ranges they use now-a-days,” said the Pixie thoughtfully. “You have to think of everything, you know, in this business, or else you lose by a fluke. I have it. I’ll change myself into an organ grinder, and you into the monkey.”

"Yes!" jeered Wendell. "Nice chance a monkey would have to be let into anybody's house."

"Well, of course," said the Pixie, somewhat crestfallen, "it was only a suggestion."

"It's got to be something that anybody would be glad to have in their house," said Wendell. "Something helpful. A furnace man. Or a gas man — to read the meter."

"Nobody's glad to have *him* in their house," grunted the Pixie. "But I get your idea. Why not a plumber to stop a leak? I have a fine plumber's transformation among my charms. I'll be the plumber and you can go as my assistant. Good idea, what?"

"The very thing," said Wendell.

"Well, after school to-morrow, you get into your oldest clothes, and I'll come around."

Wendell hurried home the next afternoon and hunted out an old suit that he had withheld from the Morgan Memorial Goodwill bag, in case of a painting job or something. Hardly had he got into these clothes, when he heard an impatient honking in the street. Looking out, he saw in front of the curb a huge Cadillac with the driver's seat occupied by a young chap in workingman's clothes who grinned up at him and beckoned frantically.

Wendell went down.

"I wouldn't have known you," he said. "It's a fine disguise."

"I think it's rather neat," returned the Pixie with quiet pride. He had a young, pleasant, intelligent face, and no one could possibly have taken him for a

Pixie. He was very suitably dressed in khaki trousers, blue coat, tan shoes, and visored cap, all somewhat creased and soiled, and a bundle of tools lay on the seat beside him.

"Where did you get the car?" asked Wendell.

"Part of the outfit," responded the Pixie. "I couldn't pass for a plumber, these days, could I, unless I went to my job in a high-powered touring car?"

The Pixie guided the car deftly down the hill, and turned from the dimpling blue Charles River into Beacon Street. They spun out over the smooth pavement through Boston and into Brookline, consulted the address that the Beauteous Maiden had written down, conferred with a policeman or two, and at length turned into one of the pretty winding roads that net the Boston suburbs.

"That's it," said the Pixie. "There's the number."

It was an attractive modern house of the near-Colonial style of architecture, white-painted, with green blinds, a brick porch, a very well-kept lawn, the whole tasteful, but not pretentious.

The Pixie rang the bell.

After a few moments, the door was opened by a young lady, who, while not positively deformed, was so very, very plain, that Wendell knew at once that she was the Ugly Stepsister.

"Leak in the bathroom?" asked the Pixie, with a concise, business-like air.

"I didn't know it. I'll ask Mummer," said the young lady. She left the door ajar, and they heard her calling, "Mummer!" as she retreated to the back of the house.

"I might slip in now, don't you think?" asked Wendell.

"No, no!" whispered the Pixie sternly. "Wait and walk in like a gentleman. No sneaking when you're with me, young man."

Wendell felt somewhat abashed, and yet resentful.

"I'd like to know if it isn't sneaking to —" he began, but just then a door opened from the kitchen and the Cruel Stepmother came forward. She had projecting teeth, and a hooked nose and chin, and her hair straggled uncombed about her face.

"What do you want?" she said.

"Leak in the bathroom," said the Pixie briefly. "Your husband telephoned."

"Oh," said she. "Right up the stairs there."

The Pixie went up with the bag of tools on his shoulder, followed closely by Wendell, and found a neat tiled bathroom. He unrolled his tools, selected a monkey-wrench and went to work on the bath-tub pipes. The two women had remained downstairs.

"Well, you're here," said the Pixie in a low tone.

"What would you do next?" whispered Wendell.

"Look about a bit," rejoined the Pixie. "I'll keep my ear cocked."

Wendell tiptoed carefully into the hall and peeked into the front bedroom. He tried a closet door, found it unlocked, opened it and peered in at the usual collection of clothes hanging in closets. There was nothing that looked like a magic cloak. He tiptoed into the next bedroom and was investigating the contents of the closet there, when he heard a sudden exclamation from the Pixie in the bathroom. He went in hastily, asking, "Have you found anything?"

The Pixie had entirely disconnected the bathtub and disjointed the pipes, which lay strewn over the white-tiled floor. He was hastily rolling up his bundle of tools.

"I'm off," he said. "If the lady asks, tell her I've gone for my tools."

"When are you coming back?" asked Wendell.

"Not at all," said the Pixie, blithely but hurriedly.

"But aren't you going to put the plumbing together again?" asked Wendell in dismay. "They can't ever do it."

"I guess they can do it as well as I can," returned the Pixie. "I never took even a correspondence course in plumbing. So long."

"But what about me?" protested Wendell.

"Well, here you are," said the Pixie impatiently. "You said if I once got you in here, you'd be all right. I've got to be on the way."

"Yes, but don't you think the Giant may come?"

"I do, indeed," said the Pixie, who was now at the top of the stairs. "In fact, I saw him only a moment ago coming down the street."

With these words, he hurried down, opened and closed the front door, swiftly but cautiously, and before Wendell had recovered from the shock, there rose the purr of the motor, and the car was off.

Its sound had hardly died away, when there came a heavy tread on the piazza that shook the house, the door was violently thrown open, and a huge voice roared,

"*Fee, fi, fo, fum!*
I smell the blood of —"

The roar stopped short. Wendell heard the Stepmother's voice.

"I wish you'd learn to control that fee, fi, fo, fum business!" she scolded. "You scared the cook so badly with it this morning that she gave notice, and here I've had to cook the dinner. It may have been all right back in Cornwall several hundred years ago, but it doesn't go here."

"Well, I'm sure," said the Giant, "I didn't mean anything. I *do* smell the blood of some one."

"It's that plumber upstairs," she said. "Come in and eat your dinner."

"Plumber?" said the Giant, and followed her into the dining-room.

They shut the door, but the Giant's roar was so loud that Wendell could still hear his part of the conversation, like one end of a telephone talk.

"Where is the leak?"

. . . .

"How did you know there was one, then?"

. . . .

"No, I didn't. No such thing."

. . . .

"Well, if he said I called him up, he's probably a gang of thieves. I'll get the police. What did he look like?"

. . . .

" With a small boy, eh ? I *knew* I smelled small boy. I'll bet he's one of these Giant-killer smarties. I'll soon fix him." He rose, shaking the house with his heavy tread.

Wendell was a brave boy, but who wouldn't quail before an angry giant ? Wendell quailed. He looked around for a place to hide.

The bathroom occupied a little ell with eaves, and under the eaves ran a wainscoting, broken by a little door that was evidently the entrance to a low closet. Wendell opened it and crawled in, not quite closing the door, as it had no handle on the inside. He crouched behind a trunk, pulled down some old clothes from a nail to cover him, and kept very still, all but his heart, which thumped loudly.

" They're not here," he heard the Stepmother say. " It looks as if they were coming back, though."

" They *are* here," roared the Giant. " The small boy's here. I can smell him. He's in that closet."

He flung open the door.

" Bring a light," he commanded.

CHAPTER XI

THE CLOAK OF DARKNESS

THE Stepmother went out and came back with a flashlight.

“ Here,” she said.

The Giant flashed it into the closet, yanked out the trunk, flashed the light in again, straight into Wendell’s face, as he crouched there half-covered by old clothes.

“ He isn’t here,” said the Giant.

“ No,” said his wife.

“ He’s *been* in here, though,” declared the Giant, sniffing. “ Strong smell of him.”

“ Probably the man had him crawl in there to see if there was any leak in the connection,” suggested the Stepmother. “ I hope he’ll come back and finish up soon. This place is a mess.”

What did it mean ? They were looking straight at him. The light was shining full on him. Yet they didn’t see him, not any more than if he were invisible.

Invisible ! Why, of course ! The invisible cloak — the Cloak of Darkness that he had come to find !

It must be this musty old garment that he had pulled down to conceal him in his fright. Sure enough ! And now came the terrifying thought, — in another moment the door might be closed upon him, and he shut fast in a prison from which there would be no easier escape than if it were a veritable Giant's dungeon in a fairy book. He must get out at once. He drew the musty folds securely about him, crawled forward, dodged under the Giant's very arm, squeezed close to the wall to pass the Stepmother, made himself small, not to crowd the Ugly Stepsister, all agog in the doorway, slid down the banisters, sneaked through the kitchen, out the back door, and away. He was free !

He scudded down the street as fast as his legs could twinkle, and turned the corner. Which way to go, was the question. A nice-looking lady was approaching. Wendell politely took off his cap and confronted her as she reached him. To his surprise, the lady sailed by without twitching a feature.

" Oh, of course. She can't see me," said Wendell. So he slipped off the cloak and hung it over his arm, and in a moment a grocer's delivery boy with a basket came around the curve.

" Say, can you tell me where to get the car for Park Street ? " asked Wendell.

" Sure, kid," said the boy obligingly. " Keep on to a big house with a stone wall around it. Then take the first street to the right and you'll come out on the car line."

Wendell thanked him and went on, found the house and the wall and the street, and there ahead of him were the electric wires. He got to the corner almost simultaneously with the car, hailed it and jumped on with a sigh of relief. It was a pay-as-you-enter car. He stood by the box and slid his hand into his pocket for the necessary dime, to realize with a shock that he hadn't a cent with him. These were his cast-off clothes. He knew it was useless to search the pockets. He remembered he had gone through them a week ago, when the ice cream-sandwich man was going by. He grinned at the conductor, feeling very foolish, and dropped off the car.

Well, of course, he could walk it all right, since he had to. It would be simple to follow the car tracks. He stuck his hands in his pockets and started off whistling.

" Hey, kid, you're dragging your mother's cape," said a young fellow who passed him. Wendell folded the Cloak of Darkness into a better shape for carrying, then decided to wear it. After he had it on, the inspiration came to him to board an electric at the next white post, and ride home free.

Perfectly simple! He got on behind an unsuspecting gentleman and took a seat near the door. Across the aisle sat a cross-eyed man. Wendell had always longed for a chance to see how a cross-eyed man worked his eyes, but he had never been allowed to stare at any one. Now he sat and stared to his heart's content, unforbidden and unseen. He stared with such concentration that he was unaware that another passenger had entered the car, a very stout old colored woman, until, ouch! she sat right down on him!

"Laws-ee!" she said, and rose up quickly, and Wendell jumped for another seat as fast as his crushed condition would permit. The old woman turned to apologize — to an empty seat! Her jaw dropped in surprise, she glared all around the car, and then lowered herself cautiously into the seat, still muttering.

Wendell felt so secure in his invisibility, that he made no attempt to restrain his laughter. He roared with mirth, and rocked, and slapped his knee, till he noticed that the passengers were all looking to see which one of them was responsible for this unseemly noise. This struck Wendell as funnier than ever. He laughed uncontrollably, but he didn't forget again to keep an eye on the door; and whenever anyone got on after that, Wendell rose to his feet with a promptitude that would have earned him a medal as the most courteous boy in Greater Boston, if the Courtesy Contest Editor of the *Post* could have seen him.

As the car proceeded northward, the seats were filled more and more, till there was no room for Wendell to sit. Towards the end of his ride, it really was too crowded for comfort, for other standing passengers stood on his feet, and wedged him in to small spaces, and lurched against him with the motion of the car, and then apologized to somebody else, till he was very glad when they arrived at Park Street, and he could run for home. He went in with the cloak under his arm and hid it in his bureau drawer.

CHAPTER XII

BLIND MAN'S BUFF WITH THE GIANT

THE Pixie dropped in as usual after supper, and tried to act as if nothing had happened; "but he can't get away with *that*," said Wendell to himself.

"Hello, old sport," said the Pixie in an offhand way. "How are the fractions?"

"Oh, they're all there," returned Wendell, "but, I say, what do you mean by sneaking off and leaving me this afternoon? I'd like to know that."

"I *didn't* sneak," said the Pixie indignantly. "I mentioned that I was going. I *never* sneak."

"I'd like to know what you call it then. You didn't wait for me, did you?"

"Oh!" said the Pixie. "Why, I'm awfully sorry, old chap. I thought you weren't ready to come home when I left."

"Why didn't you wait till I was, then?"

"Why, that would have seemed so like hurrying you," explained the Pixie, gently. "No one can do a really artistic job with that being-waited-for feeling. By the way, did you make any headway ? Get any line on the cloak ? "

" Yes, I got it all right," said Wendell. " But you might have waited to see."

" I hope I didn't seem rude," said the Pixie, penitently. " Really, to be frank, I never did take much interest in the second-hand clothing trade ; and perhaps I made it too evident that I was a bit bored. I'll wait for you next time."

" You can take it from me there won't be any next time," returned Wendell in a rude voice that was a sad contrast to the Pixie's gentlemanly manner. " I'm going alone to-morrow. I guess the Cloak of Darkness will be worth several dozens of your old transformations. So there ! "

" I am sure you will regret this hasty expression of feeling when you take time to think it over, my dear young friend," said the Pixie, gravely yet kindly. " I think I would better leave you until you come to your better self."

He instantly vanished from sight.

A few minutes later he put his head in at the door and said in a forgiving tone, " There are your fractions," and shut the door again.

Wendell felt much aggrieved. He knew that the Pixie had treated him badly, and was now trying to make it appear that *he* was at fault, and he resolved that he would really go all alone for the Cap of Thought and rely entirely upon the Cloak of Darkness for his success. So after school the next day, he rolled the Cloak of Darkness under his arm, made sure that he had enough money for carfare in his pockets this time, and took the car at Park Street for Brookline.

After he got off the car, Wendell adjusted the Cloak of Darkness, and walked on with entire assurance and a high spirit of adventure to the Giant's house.

He went up the neat brick steps and tried the front door with great caution. But it did not yield. Then he went around to the back door, and that was much better, for the door was open, and he walked straight in and found the Cruel Stepmother and the Ugly Stepsister getting dinner in the kitchen.

" These grapes aren't very good, Mummer," remarked the young lady, " not nearly so good as the ones last week."

" Naturally," returned the witch, somewhat grimly. " I had to pay for these."

" Oh, of course," said her daughter. " You didn't have your Cloak of Darkness when you went marketing to-day."

" And the High Cost of Living is something awful when the market-man can see you every minute, and you can't take a thing without paying for it," complained her mother. " If I don't find that Cloak soon, I just hope the government will get after those dishonest profiteers."

" Mummer," said her daughter, thoughtfully, after a moment.

" Well ? "

" Wasn't your Cloak in the bathroom closet ? "

" Yes, but I've hunted all through and I'm sure it isn't there."

" But, Mummer, — I hate to think of it — but those plumbers yesterday — "

The witch gasped and sat down heavily. " My word ! You're right ! That's just where it's gone ! "

" And the Cap of Thought — was that with it ? "

" No, I'm glad to say. That's in my bottom bureau drawer."

Wendell waited for no more. He tiptoed out and ran lightly upstairs. Now, which room was it ? This front one, of course. He opened the lowest drawer of the bureau. Yes, there it lay, a little filmy cap of indescribable color.

The front door banged suddenly. Wendell picked up the cap and tiptoed into the hall and looked over the banisters. Ah ! but he was thankful then for the Cloak of Darkness. For there stood the Giant. And while Wendell watched him, fascinated and secure, the Giant's huge nose began to twitch like a rabbit's, he sniffed, and then roared out,

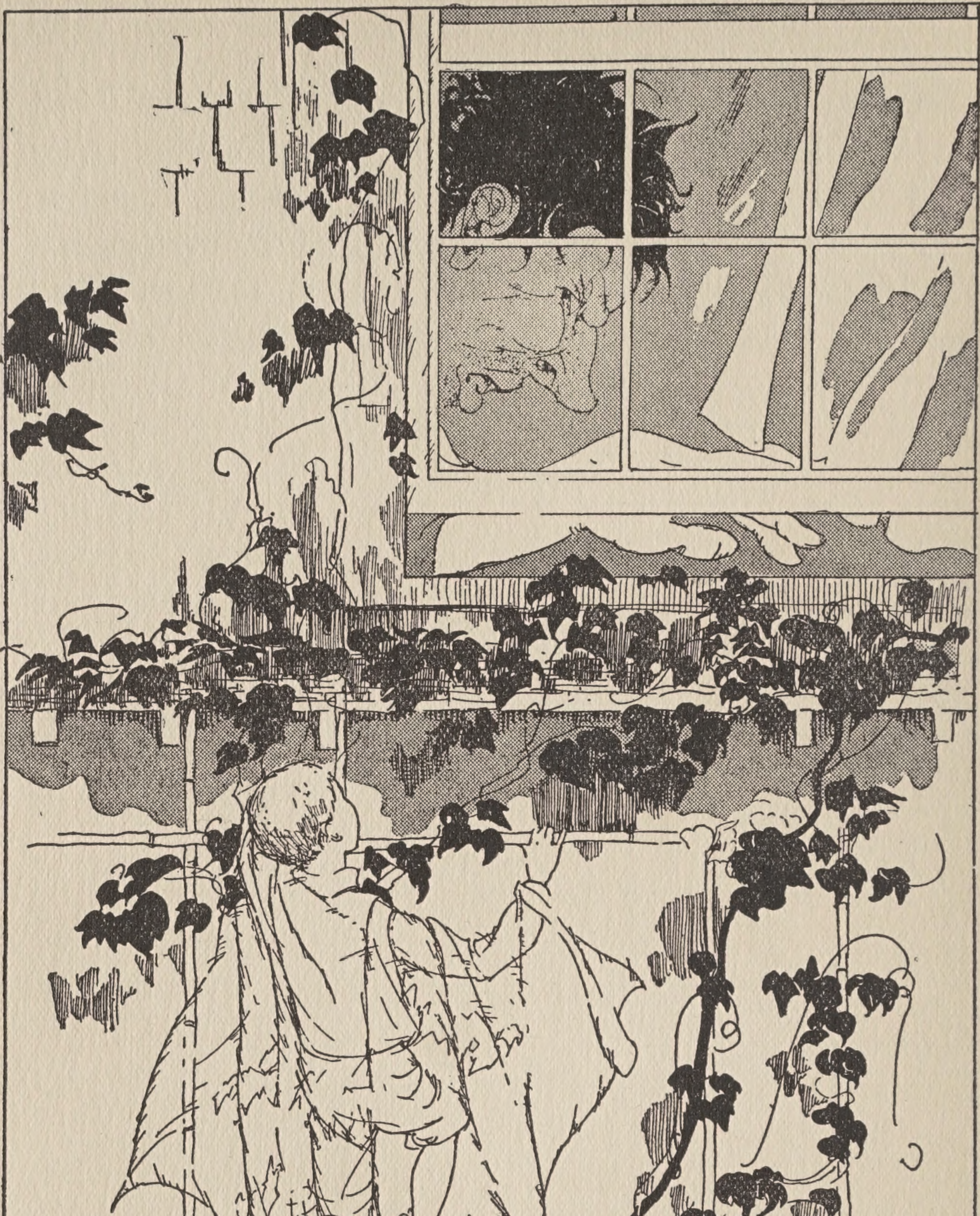
" Fee, fi, fo, fum ! I smell the blood — no, I *won't* be quiet ! — of an Englishman. Be he alive — well, your cook's *gone*, isn't she ? she can't be any *goner !* — or be he dead, I'll grind his bones — hold on ! it smells just like that boy that was here yesterday. Where is he ? " He bellowed out the question.

This roused tremendous excitement in the family. Both women talked at once: — " the little wretch ! " — " positive he stole my Cloak " — " got away invisible " — " shan't get away this time " —" Lock the doors, mummer ! " — " but we can't see him " — " I'll soon sniff him out " — this last from the Giant.

Wendell stood transfixed at the head of the stairs, clutching the Cap. Did he dare descend ? No, for the Giant growled out, " He's upstairs, all right," and started up the flight. Wendell fled before him and turned back into the front bedroom, the Giant sniffing close at his heels.

There was an open window in the room, but Wendell dared not risk a jump from the second story. There ran rapidly through his mind all the expedients that he could remember, from his reading of wild animal books, for throwing the hunter off the trail of the quarry. If he could double on his track, — but the track was too short. If he could climb to a height and break the scent by leaping off, — but the chiffonier was the highest thing in sight. If he could follow a stream of running water. He wondered whether there was anything to gain by making a dash for the bathroom. The Giant had adopted a horribly sure method. Crouching at the height of a boy, with hands outstretched to touch the wall on either side, he advanced slowly across the room. Wendell stood at bay in a corner, helpless, desperate, but still game.

Just then the telephone rang. The Giant paused to say, " If that's for me, I can't be bothered now. Take the number and say I'll call 'em later," and that one moment of interruption gave Wendell a chance to duck under the mighty monster's arm and seek refuge in the other corner behind his back. But he knew that his respite was but momentary. Although the Ugly Stepsister had gone to answer the telephone, the Witch still blocked the door, and as the Giant reached the other wall fruitlessly, he sniffed intently and once more started across the room. Wendell felt sure that he stood face to face with his last moment of life. He jammed the Cap on his head to leave both hands free, drew out and opened his jackknife and prepared to sell his life dearly.



HE SAW THE GIANT PASS THE WINDOW AGAIN

CHAPTER XIII

THE CAP OF THOUGHT

ALMOST drowned by the continuous bellow of the Giant, and yet coming distinctly to his consciousness, he seemed to hear, or rather feel, a low monotonous voice that bore a resemblance to the Giant's speaking tone, and yet had no quality of roar about it : — "I must shut that window. If he should jump out of that to the porch roof, he could easily climb down the trellis."

It was the Giant, thinking !

Wendell took a chance and jumped for the window. Just in time ! As he landed on the porch roof, the window was slammed behind him. He went backwards down the trellis, and just before his eyes dropped below the level, he saw the Giant pass the window again, pursuing the scent, which doubtless still lingered. Spent and breathless though he was, fright urged the boy on, and he ran two blocks, then dropped under a tree in a garden and lay at full length on his back with the Cloak around him. He lay there a long while, slowly recovering from his terrible exhaustion and gradually getting his nerve back. At length he rose, took off and folded his Cloak, put on his cloth cap, which he had stuffed into his pocket on entering the Giant's house, and walked on to the electric car. He had quite forgotten the Cap of Thought, which he was still wearing under his own cap, — and that single fact shows how dazed the encounter with the Giant had left him. But as soon as he got on the car, he was reminded of the Cap by the babel of thoughts that greeted him. The undercurrent was a low expressionless hum blending indistinctly from minds intent upon the newspapers ; but other thoughts reached him clearly and stridently : — " If the stores aren't closed, I'll try to get some of that blue denim for Jackie's overalls." " If he does ask me to the next dance, I really think I ought to have a new pink georgette." " I can't account for that dollar — let me see, fifteen cents for the cigar, seventeen cents for the soda, that leaves sixty-eight and five " —. Above them all, one insistent thought reiterated, savagely, " If he calls me that again, I'll show him where he gets off ! "

Wendell was very anxious to examine the Cap of Thought more closely. The brief time that he had held it in his hands in the Giant's house had been so crowded with other impressions that he had but an indistinct conception of his new treasure. He went straight to his room and took it off and was delighted with its beauty. At first sight it seemed to be made of gray cobwebs closely woven together into an almost colorless fabric, but in certain lights it looked as if woven of strands of glass in rainbow colors. As there was no one upstairs to try its magic properties on, Wendell decided to wear it in the library after dinner, and find out what his family was thinking about. He noticed in the glass, with great satisfaction, that the Cap took on the color of his own brown hair, so that it was barely visible.

There was a pleasant group in the library when he joined them after dinner. They were all very quiet. His mother was darning stockings, his father reading the *Transcript* and occasionally reading some item aloud, and his Latin School brother playing checkers with Cousin Virginia. Yet the room was filled, to Wendell's sensitive consciousness, with a fine hum, as of conversation. He sat down quietly behind his mother, who had not heard him come in.

" And then," she went on thinking, " he will step down from the stage, with everyone applauding wildly and saying, ' Yes, that's the one. That's Wendell Cabot Bradford, the prize orator, the greatest public speaker Harvard has ever produced.' " Turning, she saw Wendell, gave him a loving smile, and wondered why he looked so red and uncomfortable.

He tried his father next, and was greatly interested to hear two trains of thought going on in his mind at once, one on the widening of State Street (the subject discussed in the editorial that he was reading), and the other apparently a memory of a telephone conversation he had held that afternoon with the head-master of Wendell's school. He seemed to be turning over in his mind, while he read the editorial, the best method of introducing the subject under discussion into a conversation with Wendell ; and as the subject under discussion had been the very painful one of Wendell's low standing, Wendell decided to go to bed at once. He paused long enough to learn that his brother Otis' thought had nothing to do with checkers, but was idly resting on a dimple in the cheek of a Dedham girl named Dorothy, whom Wendell had never heard of (but he treasured the name in memory for future diplomatic use) ; and that Cousin Virginia was thinking : — " Oh, to be in New York now the toddle's there ! Boston ! Checkers ! ! Baked Beans ! ! ! Antimacassars ! ! ! ! Silhouettes ! ! ! ! ! Pantalettes ! ! ! ! ! ! ! I shall die ! "

The telephone rang. Wendell offered to go, as he was " just starting for bed anyway." It proved to be someone asking for him.

" Do you know who this is ? " asked an eager girlish voice. " Can't you guess ? It's the Beauteous Maiden. I knew you would want to hear from me, but I had *such* a time finding you ! I didn't know how you were listed. Yes, I'm getting on beautifully. Oh, yes, the contract is signed. We did it that day. The president of the producing company is delighted with me. He says I shall film beautifully. He says my youth, innocence, and beauty will make me the most popular girl in America. —How are you progressing with the invisible cloak ? — You have ? How perfectly splendid ! And the Cap of — ? You have ? How perfectly wonderful ! And the Book ? No, I don't know where she keeps it. I never saw it. But she always keeps the attic locked and never let me up there, so that might be — Oh, let me give you my 'phone number. You must let me know, of course, how it comes out."

Wendell wrote it down, but there was a queer sinking in the place where he kept his heart — or his stomach : he didn't know which. He was remembering the Kobold's remark about marrying the Beauteous Maiden. Whenever he thought of it, he was attacked by that same curious sinking. What a brainless fellow that Kobold was, to be sure, just as the Pixie had said ! He rather wished he hadn't been so short with the Pixie last night. He was a well-meaning chap, after all, and a fiend at fractions.

When he got upstairs to his room, there was the Pixie waiting for him, and Wendell was really very glad to see him, and decided not to reopen the subject of the Pixie's precipitate flight from the Giant's house.

The Pixie was tremendously interested in the Cap of Thought. He tried it on, and also the Cloak of Darkness, and had Wendell try them both on to show how they worked. And the Pixie gave some very kind advice as to getting possession of the magic book, and offered to work some of his best transformation spells ; but Wendell had his plan all made and laid it before the Pixie. It was, to go out very early Saturday morning, when he would have a holiday from school, watch the house till the Giant had left, and thus have the whole day ahead of him, to search the premises. He relied on the magic Cloak and Cap to help him out of any difficulties that might arise.

" Well, perhaps that's the best plan," assented the Pixie. " And of course, if you find it necessary, you can count on me to change you into anything we think most useful. For instance, you might like to be changed to a moving truck, if this magic book is like any other magic books I've ever seen."

" How do you mean ? " said Wendell.

" Well, the subject matter is pretty heavy, you know. It makes the book rather weighty."

" Oh, does it ? " said Wendell. " I didn't know."

" And another thing I want to warn you of," said the Pixie seriously. " Don't read any charm aloud, till you know what it's for. They ought to make those magic books fool-proof, but they don't."

" I'll remember," said Wendell.

CHAPTER XIV

THE MAGIC BOOK

WENDELL had counted on having a good deal of sport with the Cloak of Darkness and the Cap of Thought, wearing them around the house and outdoors, and even in school, but he was a bit afraid to risk any accident to them before the eventful Saturday. So he locked them securely in his chiffonier until that morning.

It was usually very hard to get him to wake up Saturday mornings, but this Saturday was an exception. He was up with the lark, — if there had been any, — ate his breakfast before the rest of the family came down, and was soon on his way over the now familiar route, to the Brookline house. He had timed it nicely. The Giant was just leaving as he got there ; and Wendell, only too well aware that his scent was now well-known to the Giant, scuttled down a side street until the monster was out of sight.

Into the familiar kitchen once more, and all through the house, went Wendell. The mother and daughter were doing the upstairs work and Wendell sat around with them for some time, following a confusion of most uninteresting household details that ran through their minds.

At length he was repaid.

" I guess I'll get my warm quilt out for the winter," thought the girl. " It's getting cold these nights. Now, *where* did Mummer put that attic key ? If I ask her, she probably won't tell me, just to be mean. I'll hunt around, instead."

Presently, the Witch went downstairs, and her daughter took that opportunity to look through her mother's bureau drawers ; and after some search, she found it.

" I'd better wait," she thought, " till Mummer goes marketing. Then I'll put the key back again and say nothing about it."

But she had no sooner gone downstairs, herself, than Wendell took the key and unlocked the attic door. He took the precaution of locking it again on the inside, so that there could be no intrusion while he was searching for the Book. He chuckled to think how chagrined the Ugly Stepsister would be when she went to look for the key and thought her mother had changed its hiding-place.

The attic was a large unfinished room with peaked roof. It was only in the middle that one could stand upright. There was some old furniture and there were several trunks. Wendell tried the trunks first. One was locked, with the key still in the lock, and opened easily. And there, inside, among a store of pillow cases and towels, lay what was undoubtedly the Magic Book. It was as easy as that!

The Book was about as large as Webster's Unabridged. It was bound in very dark, smooth leather, all worn and frayed at the corners, and fastened with a heavy iron clasp. It did look heavy, just as the Pixie had said, but Wendell seized it firmly, and attempted to lift it with an energy that almost pulled his arms from their sockets. For the Book didn't lift a fraction of an inch. It might have been soldered to the trunk.

"My! It *is* weighty! He was right!" gasped the boy.

He tried again, and again; but the book must have weighed tons. There was no lifting it.

Wendell considered the matter. There must be something he could do, — but what? Of course, he could go home and tell the Pixie and get changed into something strong, — a yoke of oxen, or an elephant. But this was Saturday. The Pixie had done Monday's fractions Friday night, and probably wouldn't be around again till Monday night. Well, well, what a disappointment!

He sat down on the edge of the trunk and examined the volume. There was no title on the cover. He undid the clasp and opened the Book at random. Yes, this was undoubtedly it. The quaint old lettering showed it, the long strange words. He spelled out what seemed a perfectly meaningless sentence.

Whish-sh-sht! A prolonged rushing noise like a sky-rocket, and there stood before him a strange and uncouth figure. It was a man somewhat above average height, wearing a costume that Wendell thought was oriental, though he had never seen anything like it before.

"Who are you?" faltered Wendell.

"I am the Slave of the Charm," replied the stranger. "I have answered your summons. What are your commands?"

"I don't quite understand," gasped Wendell. "Please explain."

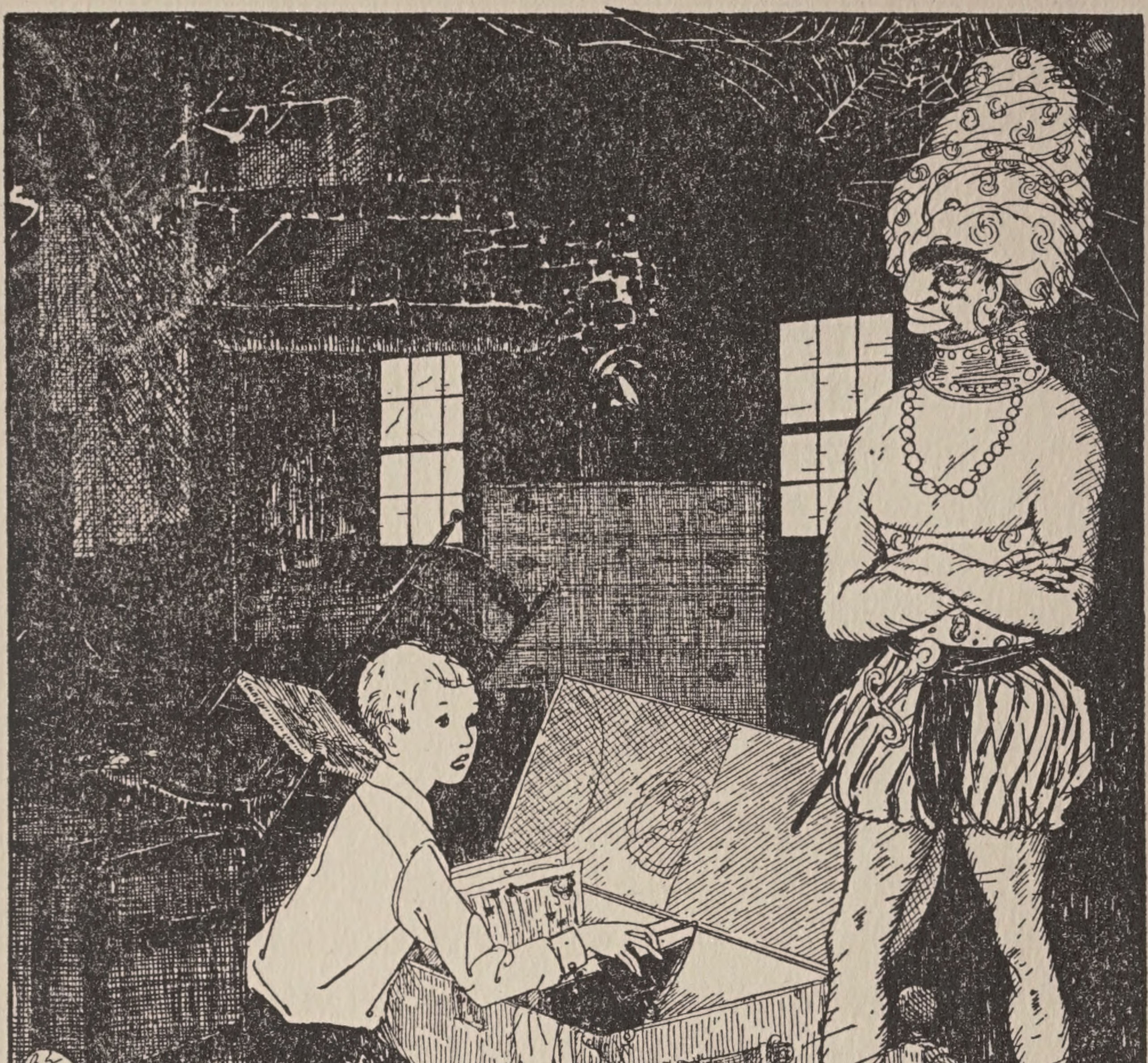
"You said the magic words that summon me," repeated the apparition. "I am here to do your bidding."

"Oh, I see," said Wendell. "Good work! Please take this Book home for me."

"I obey," returned the stranger. He lifted the Book on his shoulder, turned down the stairs and vanished straight through the locked door.

Wendell scrambled after him, first drawing around him the Cloak of Darkness, which he had thrown off. Not being a magic apparition, himself, he was forced to unlock the door to get through, and this delayed him a moment. So he caught just a glimpse of the genie, vanishing through the front door without opening it. But the witch and her daughter had seen him go and seen the Book on his shoulder; and the daughter's mind was whirling like a merry-go-round, as Wendell easily perceived.

However, it was quite otherwise with her mother. The former witch sat on the lowest step of the stairs, with such a happy and peaceful look that Wendell hardly knew her. "Free at last!" she was exulting



“I AM THE SLAVE OF THE CHARM,” REPLIED THE STRANGER

inwardly. " I have lost the Cloak and the Cap and now the Book, and at last I am disenchanted." Wendell was glad she felt so good about it. He stayed invisible, never-the-less, and hurried out after his slave, who was now nowhere in sight. His trail could be followed, however, by a long line of small boys, stringing out after him as if they were running to a fire. As it seemed impossible to overtake him on foot, Wendell took an electric for home. Evidently, his slave was there before him, to judge from the excitement that still reigned among the boys on his block. " Say, Wendell," they hailed him, " you ought to 'a seen the guy that just went into your house ! "

Wendell found the front door intact, and went up to his room. There on his study table lay the Book. The slave had vanished. Wendell's first impulse was to read it from cover to cover, but he was mindful of the Pixie's warning. He had already had one demonstration of the wonderful power and immediate operation of its charms. This once, it had turned out very neatly for him, but he might not be so fortunate another time. So he opened the Book very gingerly and pressed his lips tight together, for fear of being betrayed by his intense interest into reading some powerful and dangerous passage aloud.

The first thing that Wendell noticed was that it was all written or printed by hand and was evidently the work of different persons ; that is, the letters, some in print, some in script, changed their character from page to page, and the ink was in varying degrees of paleness, as if the transcription had been made at different epochs. Wendell observed also that the pages of paper differed. In fact, some of them were not paper at all. There were pages of very thin leather of different shades, and a sort of tough fibrous substance (that was parchment, had Wendell known it), and some strips of bark, like bark of the birch or ash. And there were paper leaves, also, but yellowed and old, none of it modern. The Book was evidently a bound collection of old manuscripts, brought together from what sources, by what means, and through how many ages, the boy could not even guess. But it was a fascinating thing for magic-loving Wendell to examine, even though much of it was unintelligible, and much more of no possible use to Wendell. He turned the brittle, fragile pages with the utmost care, fingering each at the right-hand top corner, and turning the entire page with his flat hand, very, very carefully.

The titles of the chapters, or charms, or whatever they were, delighted him beyond measure : —

"HOW TO TURN WOOD INTO SILVER.

HOW TO TURN BASE METALS INTO GOLD.

HOW TO MAKE IRON FLOAT.

TO CHANGE AN INFANT PRINCE INTO A HUMMING BIRD.

TO CUT OFF A DRAGON'S HEAD.

HOW TO UNDERSTAND THE LANGUAGE OF BIRDS.

HOW TO MAKE A FLYING SHIP." ("Huh! Magic aviation!" commented Wendell.)

"THE EASIEST WAY TO DISENCHANT A DUMB PRINCESS.

HOW TO MAKE WINGED SANDALS.

SOME TRIED METHODS FOR KILLING GIANTS."

" There you are, Wendell, my boy," said a friendly voice, and Wendell looked around and found that the Pixie was looking over his shoulder at the Book.

CHAPTER XV

A CHOICE OF CHARMS

“HELLO, old sport!” said Wendell; “I didn’t expect you till Monday.”

“Oh, I just dropped in,” said the Pixie. “Great book, isn’t it? But, go easy, son, go easy. Danger, you know.”

“Yes, I am going easy,” said Wendell. “I haven’t read one word out loud. It’s some book, though!”

“Let’s read that thing about giants,” suggested the Pixie. “That ought to just suit your case.”

“I suppose there’s no harm in reading *this* aloud,” said Wendell, hesitatingly. “Just sort of directions, you see.”

“Go slowly,” commanded the Pixie. “And if you see any charm coming to meet you, stop short.”

Wendell read: —

“‘SOME TRIED METHODS FOR KILLING GIANTS.

“‘Method ye first: — To kill a giant — ’”

"Put salt on his tail," interpolated the Pixie.

"Please listen," said Wendell, and went on, —

"'Dig a hole deeper than his height a few steps from his door. Cover it with branches of trees. Standing on the further side, away from his house, taunt him in a loud voice. When he rushes out, he will fall into the hole, and can be easily despatched.'"

"By whom?" inquired the Pixie, after deep thought. "I vote, *not* by me."

"Well, here's another," said Wendell. "'Method ye second: — Assume the disguise of a wayworn traveler. Knock at the giant's door and ask for a night's lodging.' — I can't do that," said Wendell. "He knows me by smell."

"Never mind. Read it through," said the Pixie.

"'He will tell you that he has no extra bed, but that you are welcome to share his son's.' — Yes, but he hasn't a son," said Wendell.

"Never mind. It's interesting. Go on," said the Pixie.

"'When you go to bed, he will put a gold chain around his son's neck and a hempen rope round your neck. As soon as he has left you, put the hempen rope round his son's neck and the gold chain round your own neck, and then feign sleep. After a time, the giant will return. He will feel for the gold chain, and finding it on your neck, and the hempen rope on his son's neck, he will cut off his son's head with his sword. You must then wait until you hear the giant's snores, and rising quickly' — "

"Taking care," suggested the Pixie, "not to step on a tack."

" '—make your way to his bedside, and lop off his head with his own sword.' "

"Too much shortening in that recipe," said the Pixie. "Try another."

" 'Giant-killing as recommended by Puss-in-Boots,' " read Wendell. ' "Invite the giant to a feast at your castle, and after he is in a good humor, make a wager that you can change yourself into an animal more quickly than he can. Change yourself into a cat; and whatever form the giant assumes, whether that of lion, tiger, leopard, or what-not, let the onlookers declare that the contest is a draw and that the trial must be made again. Convince the giant that in order to insure a perfectly fair trial, both contestants should change to the same shape, and choose that of a mouse. At the word, allow the giant to take the shape of a mouse, while you retain that of a cat, and immediately devour him.' "

"That sounds rather good," said the Pixie approvingly. "You'd have to practice your transformations at home, first, of course, and be sure you have the charm down pat."

Wendell did not answer immediately. "Say, that gives me an idea," he finally declared. "Why kill the Giant, anyway?"

"To please the Beauteous Maiden, of course," said the Pixie.

"Yes, but why *kill* him?" questioned Wendell. "Why not just change him into something good and harmless and useful. The Beauteous Maiden would like that just as well, wouldn't she?"

"Well, you can ask her," said the Pixie. "This is the age of labor-saving. Only, killing seems more definite, somehow, more final. But you can ask her."

"I'll try to get her on the 'phone, now," said Wendell, "and you be thinking up something to change him to. And say, look in the Book and find the charm for it."

Wendell was gone for some time. "I couldn't get her," he said when he returned. "But I'm sure she'll be willing. We'll go ahead and plan something anyway. Did you find a charm ?"

"Oh, yes, loads of them," said the Pixie. "Just listen to these : —

"'TO CHANGE A HUMAN BEING INTO A TURTLE.

TO CHANGE A HUMAN BEING INTO A BUTTERFLY.

TO CHANGE A HUMAN BEING INTO A STONE —' That might be good, —

'TO CHANGE A HUMAN BEING INTO A DRAGON —' He is that already."

"Hold on," said Wendell. "We don't want any of those. Find a general one, to change him into any old thing. We can decide what afterwards."

"All right," said the Pixie. "I'll keep on looking, and you keep on thinking."

"We might change him into a janitor," suggested Wendell, who had been looking idly out of the window until his eye fell on the janitor of Sammy's apartment house. "He's useful, you know. He puts out ashes and runs the furnace."

"Oh, that would never do," cried the Pixie. "That Giant has shown he can't be trusted in any position of absolute authority and unlimited despotism. You must curtail his powers instead of enlarging them."

"A cook would be good," said Wendell, who really had a very practical mind. "My mother and all her friends say there aren't enough cooks to go 'round."

"I told you," said the Pixie wearily, "you must curtail his powers. Just use your brain a little. Isn't the cook the greatest power in the household? Might as well leave him a giant and be done with it!"

"Well, I can't think," said Wendell. "I don't know anything useful. A victrola, perhaps. I wonder if the Beauteous Maiden has a victrola. I'm sure she can think of something, anyhow."

Sure enough, the Beauteous Maiden was resourceful enough to meet the situation. She called Wendell up herself, after school Monday, just as he was going to the telephone to try to get her.

Of course, Wendell had not been idle over Sunday. He had made himself thoroughly familiar with all the various charms for transforming people that he could find in the Book. There was one first-class charm that suited him to perfection, because it was adaptable. With this charm, you could change anything to anything else, anywhere, at any time. Wendell practiced with it, in a harmless sort of way, quite a little, to be sure he could work it. He changed his eraser to a bean-shooter, first, and shot beans at some cats on the back fence. Then he changed a very handsome and unread copy of Macaulay's History of England that his aunt had given him into a gold watch, which, however, he was careful to keep out of sight of the family, especially Cousin Virginia. He changed an old pen-wiper into a box of caramels. That was an inspiration. And in Sunday school he changed a hymnal into a mouse that ran across the Sunday school room and made quite a diversion. That was one of his successes. He did another interesting thing. He changed Sammy's janitor into a crab just as he was crossing the street. That was an easy change, because Sammy's janitor was something of a crab, anyway. He changed him back again, though, because a street on Beacon Hill is no place for a crab. By the time he heard from the Beauteous Maiden, he felt quite ready to carry out any suggestions she might offer.

CHAPTER XVI

THE HAPPY FAMILY

“I HAVE so much to tell you,” said the Beauteous Maiden’s happy voice over the telephone. “ Listen. I’ve heard from Mummer. She ’phoned. My Cruel Stepmother, you know, only she isn’t any more. She says she is entirely disenchanted, and she was perfectly lovely to me. I told her all about you, and she was so pleased. She wants to meet you, of course, but I thought it was safer to wait until you had killed the Giant. Mummer says he’s terribly hard to get on with, now that she’s stopped being a witch. He doesn’t like it a bit. When do you think you can kill him ? ”

“ I want to ask you about that,” interrupted Wendell, and he laid his plan before her. The Beauteous Maiden was very enthusiastic over it.”

“ Better ! ” she exclaimed. “ Oh, much better ! Now what shall he be changed to ? Something useful, as you say.”

"I thought of a victrola," urged Wendell, who was fond of music. "You haven't a victrola, have you? And every family needs one."

"No—o, we haven't," said the Beauteous Maiden. "That's rather good, if we can't think of anything better. But, let me see. What we really need in our family, more than a victrola, even, is Social Placement, — Background, — that sort of thing, you know. Even with Youth, Innocence, and Beauty, you do need Background, too, if you know what I mean. And it's been an awfully hard thing to manage — impossible, really — with a Giant and a Witch right in plain sight in the family. Now what *can* you change the Giant to that will be most useful for Background?"

"Mayflower Society?" said Wendell. "Sons of the American Revolution? We have a lot of those in our family. That's what you mean, isn't it?"

"In a way," said the Beauteous Maiden. "But those things aren't any use unless they are handled properly. I'll tell you the kind of thing I mean, — a Harvard professor, say. That would give us Atmosphere as well as Background."

"But they'd have to create a special Chair for him, wouldn't they?" hesitated Wendell.

"Why, no," said the Beauteous Maiden. "You'll change him down small, of course, and then he can use any chair they have."

"Well, all right," said Wendell. "I'll do it this afternoon, if you like."

"Oh, will you?" cried the Beauteous Maiden.

" That will be simply wonderful. And we'll go out to call on them tomorrow afternoon if you can."

So it was settled. Wendell was to work the charm at once and meet the Maiden at the Frog Pond after school next day. Of course, it was a perfectly easy thing for Wendell to do, after all his practice ; so he was sure the charm had worked, and felt entirely safe in going out to Brookline with the Beauteous Maiden next afternoon. She looked very charming when he met her at the Frog Pond. Even though not liking her general style, Wendell had to admit that she was good looking.

" I'm making a tremendous success," she told him. " And listen. I have such good news for the family. I've got a job for my sister in character parts. Isn't that fine ! Poor thing ! Of course she never could play anything calling for Youth, Innocence and Beauty, but she has just the face for character parts. Don't you think so ? "

How very strange it seemed to Wendell to be alighting from the electric at the familiar corner, to be retracing his hazardous steps towards that dangerous house, in perfect safety, on an entirely conventional errand. He said so to the Beauteous Maiden, and she smiled and answered softly,

" I know you ran some frightful risks for my sake. Believe me, I am not unappreciative, as time will show."

Wendell wished he hadn't mentioned it.

The neat white house was unchanged without, but the moment the Beauteous Maiden opened the door with her latch key and called, " Mummer, I'm here," Wendell was conscious of an entire change in the mental atmosphere. The Good Stepmother came running out from the kitchen to meet them. Her gray hair was arranged in a recent and becoming fashion ; she had had her projecting teeth out and had some new pivot teeth that looked much better ; and she wore an inexpensive but tasteful afternoon frock. But the greatest change was in her sweet motherly face. She put her arms around the Beauteous Maiden, half laughing and half crying, called over her shoulder, " Daughter, Daughter, here's your dear sister," and then drew her into the living-room for one more kiss. The Beauteous Maiden, for her part, looked up at her mother with all her Youth, Innocence, and Beauty shining in her eyes, and said,

" Mummer, dear, you *must* meet my Deliverer, Wendell Bradford. I can't tell in one breath how much he has done for me, but when you know it all, you will welcome him as a son even as you welcome me as a daughter," and Wendell found himself folded in the Good Stepmother's embrace.

He was very much alarmed, and before he could escape, he found the Stepsister giving him a sisterly kiss too.

" You know," he explained, in horrible embarrassment, " I'm not old enough to think about marrying." He hoped this would end the matter, but the Good Stepmother said, " I know she will wait for you, dear boy ; " at which Wendell writhed, but tried to hide it.

Then the ex-giant came in, and such a family reunion as took place then ! The present professor was a scholarly looking man with a benignant face.

He welcomed the Beauteous Maiden with great affection, and shook Wendell's hand cordially and called him a noble fellow.

The family had so much to talk about, after their long separation, that they hardly knew where to begin. The Beauteous Maiden had told her mother over the telephone all about her success in the pictures ; but of course her Stepsister had innumerable questions to ask her, for movie-life is always fascinating to non-professionals. When the Stepsister heard that the magic doors of movie-land had been opened to her, too, through this excellent offer to play character parts, she almost wept for joy.

" And to think of my envy and jealousy of you, dear Sister," she said, " and what kindness you are showing to me now, in spite of it all ! "

" Hush ! do not let us speak of that ! " said the Beauteous Maiden. " You know, my Youth, Innocence, and Beauty are equalled only by my Beauty of Character."

Then the family plans had to be discussed. The ex-giant was very happy in his professorship, and talked enthusiastically of the courses that he was to give, and an annotated text-book that he had been asked to edit.

" Then there is the question of my library," he said. " Have you any idea of the size of a college professor's library ? "

Wendell said he hadn't.

" Well, I haven't either," said the Professor. " But I've been shopping for a library this morning, and I talked with a very intelligent second-handbookstore man. He said five feet was the standard length for a student's library, and he showed me several five-foot-lengths that had been turned in to him by college students — in excellent condition. Some of them, indeed, looked as if they had never been opened. I bought ten lengths. Don't you think fifty feet of library should be about right for a professor, if five feet is required for a student?"

Wendell and the family, after some intelligent discussion of this point, agreed with him.

Wendell was feeling quite at home with his new acquaintances by this time. The Professor sat in a big Morris chair with the Beauteous Maiden on a cricket at his feet, while his hand strayed lovingly among her curls. The Stepsister perched with one arm around the Professor's neck. On the sofa, the motherly Stepmother sat beside Wendell and leaned over occasionally to pat his hand. It was altogether a charming scene of family happiness, such as is too rare, alas! in these modern days of automobiling, jazz, and summer camps. Wendell was thinking how happy they all seemed, when the Stepsister suddenly said,

"You'll have me for bridesmaid, won't you, dearest?"

"Of course, dear, if Wendell agrees with me," said the Beauteous Maiden, smiling.

Poor Wendell! With all his heart he wished that he had never become involved in his heroic role. Of course, as Deliverer, he *had* to marry the Beauteous Maiden, but he did not conceal from himself the fact that he had never really fancied her. "Even when she was a Frog," he thought, "I didn't want her around." He was thoroughly unhappy.

CHAPTER XVII

SAMMY TRIES HIS HAND

THE Stepsister brought him some lemonade and delicious nutcakes before they left, and Wendell felt better after he had eaten five of them. Still, he was glad when the affectionate farewells were over, and he and the Beauteous Maiden were once more on their way to Boston.

By chance, they met on the electrics a friend of the Beauteous Maiden's, a moving-picture friend, her leading man, in fact. He seemed very, very glad to see the Beauteous Maiden. After being introduced to Wendell, he sat down on the other side of the Beauteous Maiden, and began to talk to her very low and earnestly. The Beauteous Maiden was evidently uncomfortable. She kept turning around and trying to include Wendell in the conversation, and she laughed a good deal at whatever the young man was saying, and tried to make light of what was apparently to him a serious matter.

Now Wendell had the Cap of Thought in his pocket, and as he couldn't hear one word that the young man was saying and the Beauteous Maiden evidently didn't wish him to be left out, he took out the Magic Cap and slipped it on under his own cap as a convenience.

Around him rose the confused babble of many thoughts ; but to his utmost amazement, close beside him was a sound of sobbing, of heart-breaking sobbing, although the Beauteous Maiden was laughing gayly.

And what was she thinking ? "Oh, my dear Deliverer, I must marry you when you grow up. The Deliverer always expects it. And never, *never*, shall I let you suspect that this young man who plays my leading parts is the only man in the world for me, that I love him as maiden never loved before. No, though his heart and mine shall break, I shall uphold the traditions of all fairy tales and marry you according to the book."

An old gentleman, reading his paper across the aisle, received a great shock at this moment. His paper was suddenly dashed from his hand by a boy's cap, which descended suddenly from above. It was Wendell's cap, — not the magic one, — and he had thrown it in the air with a sudden "Hurrah !" as he heard what the Beauteous Maiden was thinking.

After he had picked up the old gentleman's paper and apologized, he pulled at the sleeve of the Beauteous Maiden and said,

"Listen here a minute. I heard what you thought."

"What do you mean?" asked the Maiden.

"I have on the Cap of Thought," said Wendell.

"Why, so you have," said she.

"And I wish you wouldn't feel so bad," he went on. "You can marry the young man just as well as not. I don't want you to wait for me. By the time I'm grown up, I may like some other girl better. Anyway, you just needn't consider me. Suit yourself entirely."

"Do you mean that? Really?" she asked.

"I certainly do," said Wendell fervently.

"Oh, how perfectly wonderful!" she cried; and then Wendell took off his Cap of Thought, for her thoughts of the young man grew so enthusiastic that Wendell was rather bored by listening in.

"Well, that's well over," he said to himself gayly "And I'm certainly coming out of this adventure all to the good. There's the Pixie doing my fractions for me. There's the Cloak of Darkness and the Cap of Thought whenever I want to do a little sleuthing, and there's the Magic Book for all-'round enchantment. I certainly am in luck."

At Park Street he said good-bye to the grateful Beauteous Maiden and her leading man and started along Joy Street for home, with a light-heartedness that he had not known for days. He turned into his own street and there was Sammy Davis, shinnying up a street lamp.

"Hi, Sam!" he called. "Come on over." He suddenly realized that he had lost track of Sammy lately, with so many magic tasks on foot.

"Come on in, Sam," he said. "I've got something to show you."

Sam came in.

"It's up in my room," said Wendell. "Come on up."

Once there, Wendell brought out the Cloak of Darkness.

"Is that all?" asked Sammy.

"That's enough, *I* guess," said Wendell. "You just wait."

He threw the Cloak around his shoulders. Sammy stared open-mouthed. He gazed around the room, then started up in fright and rushed to the open window.

"Here I am," cried Wendell, and stood there grinning, visible once more.

While Sammy still stood staring, Wendell pulled the Cloak around himself again, and laughed outright at Sammy's face. Then he came into sight again and asked generously,

"Want to try it yourself?"

Of course Sammy wanted to; and the boys took turns being "it" in a novel kind of blind-man's-buff, which was a great deal more fun to Wendell than when he had played the same game with the Giant.

After that, Wendell brought out the Cap of Thought and adjusted it to his head. "Now think of something, Sammy," he said.

"Think of what?" asked Sammy, his mind immediately becoming a perfect blank, as Wendell could feel.

"Oh, say a verse," suggested Wendell. "That's right:—'Listen, my children, and you shall hear Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere.'"

"Gee, Wendell! How do you do it?" asked Sammy in bewilderment.

"Try it again," said Wendell. "I get you. 'The breaking waves dashed high On a stern and rock-bound coast.'"

"I know something," said Sammy. "You hold on a minute. I got you stung this time."

Sure enough! Though Wendell could get the sounds perfectly, they were too unfamiliar for him to repeat.

"I can't *say* it," he explained, "but I can hear it all right. It's some foreign language. I'll bet it's Yiddish."

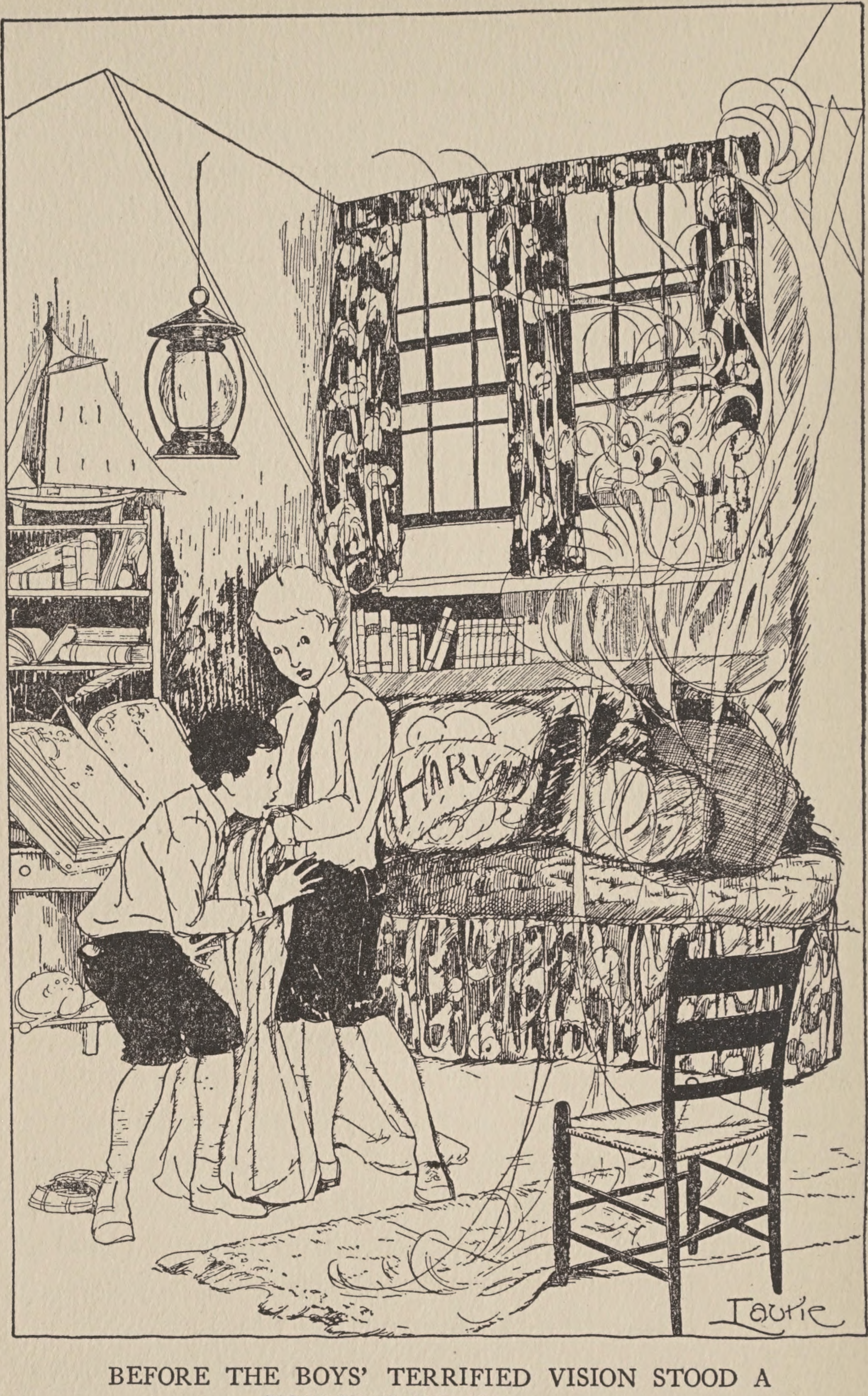
"Yes, it is," said Sammy. "Now let me try."

So Wendell put the Cap on Sammy's head and thought, "Sammy Davis, you're a nut!" and Sammy grinned and enjoyed the joke on himself.

"Gee, Wendell!" said Sammy. "You certainly are in luck. You can go anywhere and find out anything. You are a lucky dog!"

"Yes sir!" said Wendell. "And I'll never have to study again. I can just wear this Cap in school and when the teacher gives out a question, I'll read the answer right in his mind, and say it right off. I'll do that all through school and all through college, and then when I'm in business, I'll put on the Cloak and go right into the offices of all the big business men, Rockefeller and Henry Ford and everybody, and wear the Cap and find out just what they are thinking and how they make their money, and I'll make mine the same way."

"Gee!" said Sammy again and could find no further speech.


HARV
Laurie

BEFORE THE BOYS' TERRIFIED VISION STOOD A HORRIBLE DEMON

"And that isn't all," said Wendell. "Here's the biggest thing yet."

"What is it anyway ?" demanded Sammy, looking suspiciously at the magic volume.

"*A Book of Spells*," said Wendell impressively.

"Huh ! A spelling book, eh ?" echoed Sammy unenthusiastically.

"NO, no," said Wendell. "*Spells*. Charms, you know. Enchantments. Look here," turning the pages : "'HOW TO TURN BASE METALS INTO GOLD.' 'THE EASIEST WAY TO DISENCHANT A DUMB PRINCESS.' 'SOME TRIED METHODS FOR KILLING GIANTS.'"

"Hey ! Lem*me* see," cried Sammy. "Some book, I'll say. 'HOW TO PLACE A LOST RING IN A FISH'S MOUTH.' What do you know ! 'HOW TO LOCATE THE PLACE WHERE TREASURE IS BURIED.' Some book, I'll tell the world ! Say, some of this don't make much sense, does it ? '*Abacadabra, alaka, balaka,* —'" he spelled out a word or two.

A horrible odor filled the room, — like burnt scrambled eggs, thought Wendell. There floated before his eyes a dimness as of smoke. It took shape of an awful humanness, and took color as of white ashes. It slowly took on a dull glow, which brightened until before the boys' terrified vision stood a horrible demon, angrily glowing a fiery red. He gave out heat like a kitchen stove on ironing-day, and the rug where he stood began to smoke.

"What are your commands ?" he hissed.

There were none. Both boys were through the door and downstairs before he had finished the question. Sammy fled in terror before that frightful apparition, and Wendell went to bring Sammy back, — but he didn't think of that good reason till afterwards. Neither boy paused in flight till the street was reached.

" Did he have hoofs and a tail ? " gasped Sammy.

They stared up at the top windows. A jet of flame shot up. The muslin window curtain was on fire.

" Fire ! ! ! " yelled Sammy, dashing down the street to the alarm box. Wendell — this to his credit — ran back into the burning house and alarmed the family. Mrs. Bradford rushed for her jewels. Cousin Virginia, with great presence of mind, put in a fire call by telephone. Sammy's alarm had already reached the fire station on Mt. Vernon Street. Almost as Virginia left the telephone, the clang of the engines was heard, and a line of firemen carried the hose upstairs, with their formula, " Is everybody out ? " The servants rushed clamoring to the street. Virginia ran to help and reassure Mrs. Bradford, and Wendell followed the last fireman up to his room.

The smoke was so dense that at first he could see nothing. Then he saw that the stream of chemical had extinguished all the flames, and was now directed at a fiery pillar in a sort of human shape that glowed redly through the smoke. Wendell alone knew what it was. Little by little the angry glow faded to white ashes. Gradually it dimmed to floating smoke. The fire was out. The smoke cleared. The firemen with-drew. The family assembled to view the blackened walls, to sniff the depressing odor, as of a burnt-out district, to exclaim over the havoc and ruin wrought in those few minutes.

"How did it happen?" everyone asked, and

"I don't know," said Wendell helplessly. How could he explain?

"Wasn't that Sammy Davis in here?" asked the cook. "You two boys were up to something, *I* know."

His pretty room was a thing of the past — completely burnt out. The walls were black. A few charred rags had once been window curtains. A sodden rag underfoot was his rug. The closet was burned through. Blackened shreds of garments hung on the nails. Wendell's desk was but charred timbers. His books were paper ashes.

"I know why Wendell looks so woe-begone!" said Cousin Virginia. "His school books are burned."

"Don't worry, dear," said his mother. "Everything is covered by insurance. You wanted your room re-decorated, you know, and it is easy to replace the clothes and books."

Ah, yes, but who could replace the Cloak of Darkness? Who could restore the Cap of Thought? What insurance would cover the Book of Spells? Wendell was doomed once more to the drudgery of other mortals, to learning his lessons like other boys, to plodding his toilsome way through college, to making his own business success, unaided by the great minds of the world's financiers. No wonder he stood there glum and almost tearful amid the blackened ruins of his room and of his future.

Then suddenly, as he stood by the window, his eyes fell upon the street below and the crowd of neighbor boys still lingering about the scene of the fire, and upon the stone post that stood at the entrance to the court over the way. And his eyes brightened to something like happy anticipation as he said under his breath,

" Well, anyway, I have one wish left on the Wishing Stone."

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